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JAPANESE NŌ PLAYS

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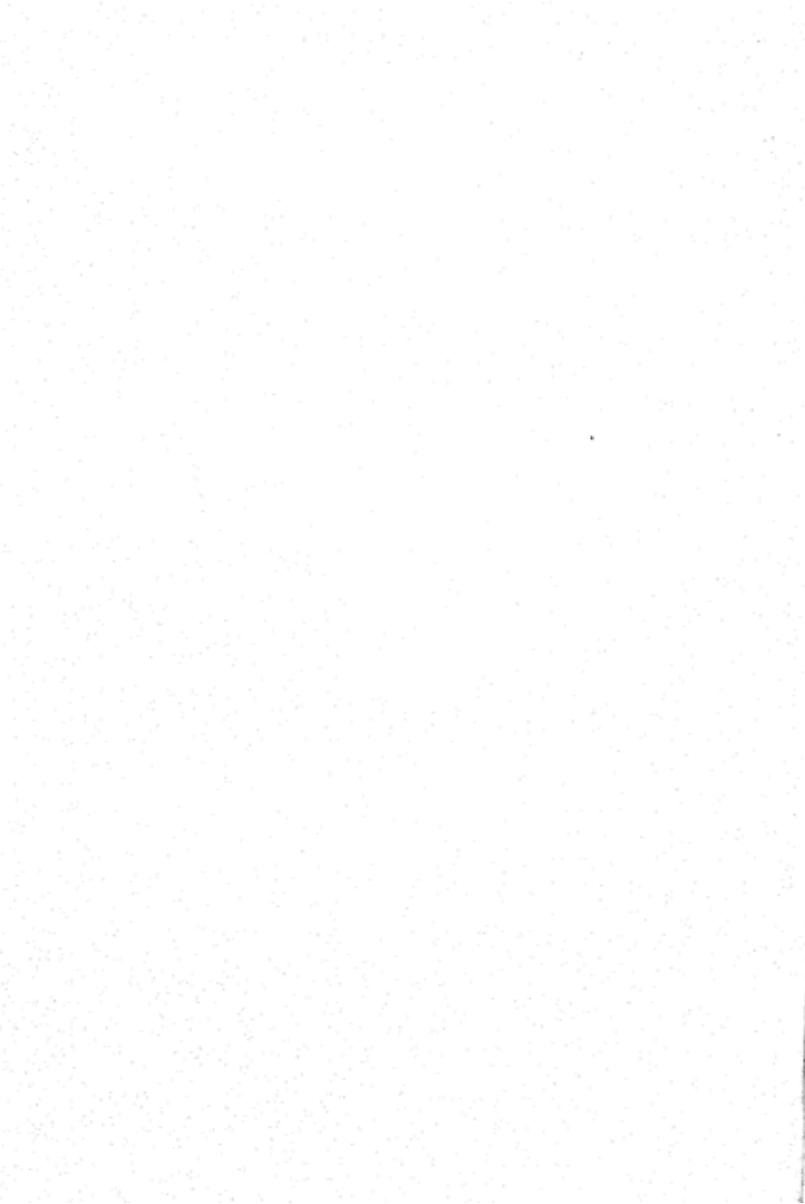
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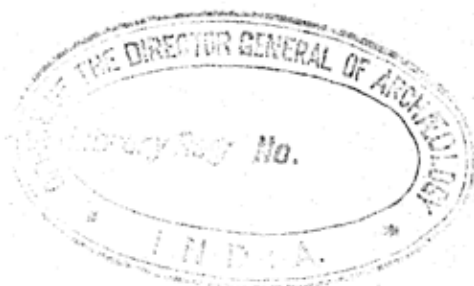
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DR. S. A. KAPADIA

NŌGAKU

JAPANESE NŌ PLAYS



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WISDOM OF THE EAST

NŌGAKU

JAPANESE NŌ PLAYS

BY BEATRICE LANE SUZUKI

A FOREWORD BY IWAO KONGO

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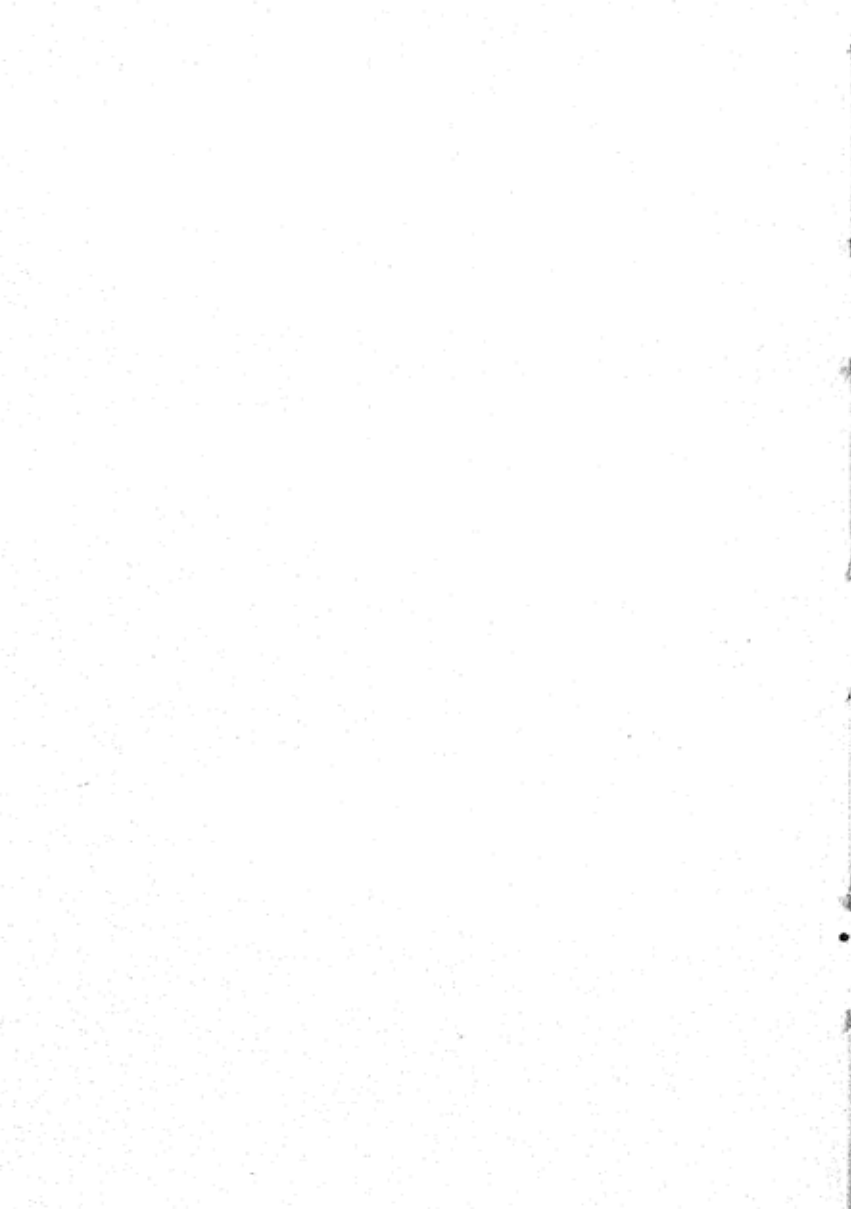


EDITORIAL NOTE

THE object of the Editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West—the old world of Thought and the new of Action. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.

L. CRANMER-BYNG.
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FOREWORD

THE fundamental principle of the Nō play is what is technically known as Yūgen. This is a vocal movement in quietude and quietude in movement, or the realisation of a state of identity in which the art and Zen are perfectly harmonised. Unless this is fully mastered by the players, Nō cannot claim to be a living art; that is to say, the knowledge of Nō must be based on that of the spirit of Oriental culture.

Mrs. Suzuki is known as an earnest student of Buddhism, and her long residence in the East, added to her untiring efforts to get into the soul of the East, has enabled her to awaken in herself a deep love for and a well-balanced understanding of Nō. Her study of Nō, one of the oldest and greatest arts created by Japanese genius, must be said to have a solid foundation. There is no doubt that this present work of hers properly describes the spirit of Nō. This will surely give Western visitors to our shore an opportunity to

realise that there is something deeply artistic in Japanese life besides geisha dances and cherry blossoms.

Iwao. Kongo

宮田 義雄



Kyoto, 1932.

PREFACE

IN preparing this little book on Nō, I have depended almost entirely upon Japanese sources. I have been much indebted to the works of Mr. T. Nogami, Mr. A. Nosé, Mr. N. Ikenouchi, and of course the writings of Seami, and to other Japanese writers of the Nō, and to much helpful information from Mr. Iwao Kongo, the head of the Kongo School of Nō in Kyoto. English readers who wish to read more versions of the Nō plays will find them in Mr. Arthur Waley's *The Nō Plays of Japan*, and in Dr. Marie Stopes's *Plays of Old Japan*. My own versions—for I am neither poet nor philologist—are simple presentations of the story, giving, I hope, a suggestion of the Nō picture.

In a short exposition like this many interesting matters must be omitted and only hints and suggestions given.

The Nō is so beautiful that it well repays study and above all viewing it. More can be learned from actually witnessing the Nō plays than from any amount of reading, and each succeeding performance gives a deeper clue to knowledge and appreciation.

I thank the following gentlemen who have assisted me in my study of Nō : Mr. S. Sugihira and Mr. K. Yokogawa, of Otani University ; Mr. H. Inada ; my husband, D. T. Suzuki ; Mr. G. Makiyama, who first unlocked for me the door to Nō appreciation ; and above all, Mr. Iwao Kongo, for the inspiration of his wonderful interpretations, without seeing which I could never have attempted to write of Nō. In appreciation and admiration, I should like to dedicate this little book, imperfect though it is, to him.

BEATRICE LANE SUZUKI.

Kyoto, 1932.

INTRODUCTION

THE Nō play accompanied with music is a unique form of the Japanese drama. It is a synthetic art. The harmony of music, words, and acting is perfectly carried out. It is the oldest form of the drama in Japan, and in its present representation it has been handed down from ancient times to the present day with practically no change in its form or in its spirit. To know something of Nō is to know something of Japan, for in the Nō is contained much that will give a clue to the psychology and sentiment of the Japanese. Nō is the essence of art; the very heart of Japanese culture is revealed in it. It has the flavour of *sabi*, a term which is used to denote the expression of the tea ceremony, and of Zen Buddhism. It also is the soul of Japanese poetry and of Nangwa art. In fact, it is the very spirit of all the arts of Japan. In addition to the profound meaning in the wording, there is the added harmony of the music and song and grace of the movements and the beauty of the pictures. All these unite to produce a perfect whole. Nō, in fact, is like a picture in which each fact serves to give the true

atmosphere. There is nothing like it in the world to-day. The Japanese have been its devotees since the fifteenth century, and to-day its popularity is not wanting. Once the enjoyment of the aristocracy alone, it is now patronised by literary, scholarly, and artistic people. The general effect of a Nō play is the calming of the mind as in the tea ceremony. Its key-note is harmony. Nō does not seek to represent realistically, but to give the unity of the poetry and art and arouse in the spectator a single emotional impression.

This unity of action and mind is made significant in the meaning of the word Nō, which is derived, as some authorities think, from the Buddhist phrase *Nō sho funi* (unity of mind and form), although other scholars assert that as the Chinese character which is used for Nō is talent, it signifies a performance of talent.

As to the origin of the Nō, we find that singing and dancing, holding branches, accompanied by the clapping of hands, were found in very early days, but definitely written musical notes with complete words began to be used at the end of the Nara (A.D. 710-793) and the beginning of the Heian (794-858) eras at the Imperial Court for sacred ceremonies. Although the musical notes were imported from China and Korea, they were harmonised with Japanese, and the words themselves were pure Japanese, and were simple and

short, being just enough to explain the feeling of the performance. In the Ashikaga period (1338-1573) the Kajokubu dance originated: this represented various deeds of loyalty and filial piety, or famous places were described. The Kuse portion of modern Nō is derived from this ancient style. It is also related that Prince Shotoku ordered one Kawakatsu to make songs and dances to be performed at the Imperial Court.

Towards the end of the Kamakura period (1224), the Shirabyoshi and Kowaka dances were given. Some of these stressed dancing more than singing, while others emphasised songs.

The forms of Dengaku are very interesting, and if space permitted its development would be traced and its forms presented.

All other dance and song representations had to give way to the Sarugaku which, after A.D. 1430, became the Nō. Sarugaku united in itself the elements which it found in Dengaku, Kowaka, Kusemai, Ko-uta, Bugaku, and Ennēn-mai, the last one developing into a form of song and dance used at Buddhist ceremonies.

The Sarugaku was a feature of the Ashikaga period. The characteristic of Ashikaga life was Zen-mi, i.e. a taste for Zen or a taste for tea, and as stated before, the feeling of *sabi* or *shibumi* is the essence of the art of Nō. At the Shinto shrines the Sarugaku were chiefly performed, and

at the Ise shrine there were three different schools or groups of performers, and in Omi, Tamba, Kawachi, there were similar services for shrines. In Nara at the Kasuga shrine four groups arose, forming the present schools of Komparu, Kwanze, Hōsho, and Kongo. The performances for the gods were very refined; from these we have the first form of the Nō, which has received the name of Divine Nō. So we may say that the origin of Nō is religious. The differences between these schools are of interest, but cannot be dealt with here.

Sarugaku was brought to perfection by Kiyotsugu and Seami, and became the Nō as it is known to-day. These two men revised the old dances and songs which had certainly been written by Buddhist priests, and added new ones. Shūgen Nō, or the celebrating of happy and successful events, was now developed, and Yūreno and Shoreno Nō, which tells of warriors who after fighting consoled themselves with Buddhist thoughts. Indeed, Buddhist sentiment pervades the Nō. Ingwa, or Fate, was the pervading note in these plays, and represents the tendency of the thoughts of the people. The completion of the Nō therefore took place in the Ashikaga or Muromachi era, and reached its height in what is called the Higashiyama period. The distinction of the schools was emphasised, and some alterations in the words of the text took place.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) loved the Nō and even performed in it himself. There was a pupil of Kongo named Kita Shichidayu who was a very skilful dancer. He was a favourite of Hideyoshi, who advanced him, with the result that the Kita school was added to the other four.

In the Tokugawa period (1603-1867) Nō was favoured, especially by the Shoguns, and was used for ceremonious occasions. All *samurai* studied it as an accomplishment.

The most famous of the early great Nō performers and adapters were: Yūsaki Jibu Hata no Kiyotsugu, also called Kwanami Sō-on (1355-1406); his son Yūsaki Saemondayu Hata no Motokiyo (1373-1455); and Komparu Shikibudayu Hata no Ujinobu (1405-1468), the son-in-law of Motokiyo, also called Zenchiku. Of these Seami was the greatest. He was born in 1373, became a favourite of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, who delighted in music and dancing, and was a patron of Zen Buddhism. It was natural that Seami should become imbued with the Zen teachings, that many of his friends should be Zen priests, and that, therefore, he should turn to them for suggestions in the compositions and renderings of his Nō plays. It was from Zen too that he got the term and meaning of *Yūgen*, of which more will be said later. He uses this word much in his works, continually referring to it as that which is

necessary to the Nō master. It is that subtle something which underlies the surface of things, the reality of art, of which only a hint or a glimpse is given objectively. Nō must be full of *Yūgen*.

Seami was the author of the *Kwadensho* and other books which discuss problems of Nō, and were written primarily for the instruction of his pupils. He was a master of the Nō in all its forms, as a writer, adapter, composer, teacher, manager, and actor. It is to his genius that we owe the most perfect Nō plays. Out of two hundred and thirty-five Nō, ninety-three are attributed to Seami.

As to the materials for the stories, we find that they were taken from ancient Chinese and Japanese poetry, from the *Heike Monogatari* (Tales of the Heike), the *Genji Monogatari*, the *Ise Monogatari*, and the *Yamato Monogatari* as well as from other old stories. Another source of material is found in the "patches of brocade," sayings and phrases from the Buddhist *sutras*.

The subjects of Nō plays can be classified as they are epic or lyrical. The plays of the gods, such as "Takasago" and "Oimatsu," are epic; so, too, are the battle pieces. But the lyrical ones include the romantic plays, such as "Matsukaze," "Yuya," "Izutsu," the plays depicting mother-love, like "Sumidagawa," "Sakuragawa," "Miidera," "Kashiwazaki," and also such pieces as "Semimaru" and "Kagekiyo."

THE PROGRAMME

At a Nō performance, which begins nowadays at either ten o'clock in the morning or at one o'clock in the afternoon (less often at four in the afternoon), and lasts from seven to eleven hours, a definite programme is given, and this is practically the same as in the early days.

This full programme consists of from five to six parts :

1. A so-called divine play (*shinji*), having something to do with the Shinto gods.

2. A warrior play (*dan* or *shuramono*), in which generally the spirit of the dead warrior appears in the second part.

3. A romantic play (*jo* or *katsuramono*), in which the chief character is a woman and the chief motive love.

4. A *kyō* play, in which the chief character is mad.

5. A *ki* play, in which a demon takes the prominent part.

Sometimes in the place of Number 4 a *Genzai-mono* is presented, which gives the scenes from existing life of the world, depicting manners and customs. Sometimes a sixth play is added, the *Shūgen* or congratulatory Nō, or at times it takes the place of Number 1. Some of the most famous Nō plays of the Number 1 group are : "Okina," "Himuro," "Takasago," "Tsurukame," "Naniwa," "Yoro," "Oimatsu," "Chikubushima."

Examples of the Warrior plays are : "Tomonaga," "Sanemori," "Yorimasa," "Yashima," and "Ebira."

In the third portion of the programme we come to the most romantic type, and the one which takes the longest time to perform. Among the most performed Nō of this class are : "Yuya," "Hagoromo," "Komachi," "Izutsu," "Nishikigi," "Ninin-Shizuka."

The fourth class generally deals with the subject of a mind distraught, of a mother seeking for her lost child, as in "Kashiwazaki," "Sumidagawa," "Miidera," "Sakuragawa," "Hyakuman," or of one crazed by love, as in "Dōjōji." When the *Kyō* play is substituted by a *Genzaimono* play, we find a court scene, as in "Ōhara Goko," or the family life of a *samurai*, as in "Manju."

The fifth class is the Demon play. By this time, after many hours, the audience is perhaps weary and needs something lively and vigorous. The demons are always full of action and vitality. Characteristic ones are : "Ōyeyama," "Kurama-tengu," "Adachigahara," "Matsuyama-tengu," and "Tsuchigumo."

The Flower plays, wherein the soul of a flower appears aspiring to Buddhahood, fall into class three or four. Some of the most beautiful of the Nō plays belong here, such as "Basho," "Kochō," "Fuji."

At New Year's time there are six and even seven

plays presented on one day, both *Shin* and *Shūgen* being given.

Interspersed between the Nō performances, *Kyōgen* or farces are given to remove or enlighten the emotional stress of the Nō. But I do not say anything about them, for they are in a class by themselves, and need separate treatment. To be appreciated fully, they should be seen as acted by the Shigeyama family of Kyoto, father, son, and little grandson.

TEXTS, LITERARY FORM OF THE NŌ

The Nō plays are written partly in prose (*kotoba*) and partly in verse (*utai*). To translate these texts written in the Japanese of long ago, full of poetic allusions and using pivot words and puns, is extremely difficult. All that can be done is to suggest something of the story and its feeling. To a Japanese lover of Nō all the gradations of the voice between prose and full singing have deep meaning, but this is impossible to be obtained in a translation. For example, the versions here make no claim to poetic value; all that is intended is a suggestion, a passing picture, which to enjoy fully must be experienced in actuality. No one who has not seen a Nō play performed by the great Nō exponents can have any idea of the subtle, artistic, and poetic form of the performance, and no one who is not a

master of the language can understand the subtleties and beauties of the texts. In fact, no foreigner can fully understand the Nō, however he may love and appreciate it. He can only grasp a bit of its fleeting charm and attempt to give a glimpse of it to others.

The texts of the Nō plays are called *utai-bon*. Each school of Nō (Kwanze, Kongo, Komparu, Hōshō, and Kita) has its own texts which contain some differences in reading. These books give only the *kotoba* and *utai* * forms which are used for singing; words of ordinary characters called *kyōgen* (not to be confused with the farces called *kyōgen*), and interludes which occur in the dramatic pieces, are omitted.

There are now about two hundred and fifty extant Nō. Kwanze Motoaki revised two hundred Nō, and each school has added some, making about fifty more. Of these, one hundred out of the two hundred and fifty are played.

There is much about the Nō which must perforce be omitted from this little book, and everything

* Japanese poetry is a kind of blank verse in an alternation of phrases made up of five and seven syllables each. The rhythm is that of 5, 7, 5, 7, 7, making 31 syllables in all. The Nō wording is made up of a mixture of poems in this form with prose, *kotoba*, but the *kotoba* of the Japanese Nō is not like ordinary prose, for it has a chant of its own. The poetic part of the Nō composition has irregularity, and it is this very irregularity which gives it life and vitality. The repetition of an entire line is frequently done, and this, prolonging the emotion of the hearer, is often very effective.

concerning the *makura-kotoba*, or pillow words, and puns, words of double meaning, must be left over for another time. To enjoy the Nō they are not essential, but they are of great interest to the student of the language. The language of the Nō is a mixture of classical Japanese and Chinese. The words are refined and still further refined, so that we can see in them the spirit of Japanese culture.

There is *Yūgen* in the wording as well as *Yūgen* in the acting. In Seami's time, *Yūgen* was used to represent refined taste in general. Later in the Tokugawa period, this word took on a broader and deeper meaning, and was the standard to denote all kinds of art.

According to Seami, a Nō play should possess three elements, *Shu*, *Shaku*, and *Sho*: *Shu* is to have adequate matter, *Shaku* to have harmony between the musical composition and the plot, and *Sho* to have a suitable expression of word in harmony with the peculiar flavour of the work.

The chorus consists generally of eight to twelve men, clad in ceremonial dress.

The music of the Nō is to provide a background to the wording and dancing. To the Japanese the wording comes first in importance, for the dancing and singing are appreciated as they blend with it in harmony; but to a European no doubt the dancing and general artistic whole appeal most.

The music of the Nō is a study in itself, and requires both thorough knowledge and appreciation of forms, and these also are difficult to one who does not make a special study of it. The singing of the *utai* alone, unaccompanied in any way, is an accomplishment in Japan, and many young men learn it as in European countries they would learn the piano or violin.

The forms sung in the Nō are the *shidai*, *issei*, *uta*, *sashi*, *kuri*, *kuse*, *rongi*, *waka*, and *kiri*, but in this small book we cannot study them. The beauty of the singing of the Nō is due to a peculiar rhythm. The chorus sings sometimes alone, but acts also as an accompaniment to the singing of the actors or to their dancing. Very often the chorus sings as if it were a substitute for the *shite*, but at other times it is an impersonal comment of the action.

A NŌ PERFORMANCE

We come now to the presentation of a Nō performance. Nō theatres are much smaller than ordinary theatres. The Nō stage is simple, but it is contained in a building by itself with its own roof, entirely detached from the audience which sits on three sides of it, the sides being open. The stage is made of cypress wood eighteen feet square, and supported by four pillars. On the boards at the back of the stage is painted an

old pine-tree in bright emerald to represent the pine-trees at the Kasuga temple in Nara.

Leading to the stage from the dressing-room is a gallery nine feet wide and about eight feet long, on which the actors pass to the stage. Three pine-trees are set before this passage. The members of the chorus sit on the bare floor at the right of the stage, the musicians at the back. Under the stage and passage-ways large earthenware pots are buried in order to give resonance to the dance.

The players who take part in the Nō are divided into four sections—the *shite*, *waki*, *hayashikata*, and *kyōgen*. The *shite* is the chief character of the Nō: the entire play centres upon him. He may have supporting actors called *tsure*. The secondary character is the *waki*, and he in turn may have supporters, who are his *tsure*. The *kyōgen* players often take the part of his *tsure*.

The *shite*, however, dominates the others who play very subsidiary rôles to his. Indeed, the critic of Nō, Mr. Nogami, goes so far as to say that Nō is really played by one character only, and so he maintains that in consequence Nō is not true drama. It can certainly be asserted that the weight of the play rests upon the *shite*—upon his appearance, his acting, singing, and dancing. Upon his interpretation of the Nō, the play rises to the height of beauty or falls far below it. Yet the *waki* and *tsure* often give him

valuable support and help to make his presentation clearer and more adequate. Nevertheless, the *shite* is the leader of all the actors, of the chorus, and of the musicians ; all hang upon him.

The *hayashi* is the orchestra, consisting of four instruments—the flute, the *ōzutsumi* or large hand-drum, the *kozutsumi* or small hand-drum, and the big drum, played with sticks and only in use in some plays. The flute is of a piercing sweetness, and gives emphasis at certain times of the play at the beginning, at the end, and at emotional crises. It seems at times to mark the entrance of a heavenly visitant, to herald the approach of something supernatural. The *ōzutsumi* is played with the bare hand, and held on the knee ; the *kozutsumi* is played with a plectrum, and held on the shoulder. The musicians playing the hand-drums often give cries in accordance with the playing and singing. These cries of *Ha* and *Ho* seem at first to a European disconcerting and unpleasing, but later on, one becomes accustomed to them and would miss them if they ceased, for they increase the emotional feeling exceedingly. In a crisis of feeling, their short sharp cries repeated over and over cause the heart to bound and the mind to leap forward. At such moments, were these cries absent, the play would be much tamer. The play upon the emotion of the audience and the quickening of this emotion are due very largely

to these cries. Instead of detracting they enhance the beauty of the Nō.

The drums played by the men who make the cries give the rhythm to the music, and the song and the movements are in harmony with it, i.e. the syllables making up the verse of the poems must be fitted to the beats of the music (an eight-beat measure), and the steps of the dancers must also conform to it.

The members of the chorus sit upon the extreme right of the stage. The rhythm of the chorus singing contains a rise and fall of tone that makes me think of the swell of an organ or the ripple of the sea. It seems at times to stir the depths of being. This is true also of the solo singing, especially of the singing of the *shite*. The singing of Mr. Iwao Kongo is especially beautiful. All emotions seem to be caught in his voice—force, vigour, pathos, love, and a certain spiritual quality which has something almost supernatural about it which is difficult to describe.

In the Nō play there is no scenery. Stage fixtures are of the simplest: an open framework represents a boat, a house is shown by four posts, covered with a roof. The fixtures are intended to suggest and not to be realistic. A fan may represent a knife, a dipper, a brush; a forest is depicted through the means of branches.

The costumes are very beautiful and elaborate. While the stage properties are simple, the costumes

are gorgeously ornate. They are in the style of the Middle Ages, generally of the Court. They are on a large scale, and there are various under-robes. They are made sometimes of heavy silks and brocades, which give majesty and dignity to the figure, and then, again, they are of light waving texture, which gives a bird-like elasticity and grace. Often they have wonderful designs of flowers and crests, and very often the designs on the garments have some relation to the subject of the play. The costumes are so made as to give great size to the characters, and the greatness of the size helps to present an aspect of grandeur. The use of the sleeve is an act in itself. At times the sleeve is spread in such a way that the character resembles a bird in flight ; again, with spread sleeves and gliding on-coming walk, the figure seems like a ship in full sail ; again, the effect is like that of a drooping flower. It is surprising what effects can be made with this use of the sleeve. In dramatic moments the sleeves are flung gracefully over the arm. This is derived from its use in the Goshiki dances of the Imperial Court.

The fan plays almost as prominent a part as the sleeve. It is used as a property—paper, sword, etc.—but chiefly as a kind of wand or artistic implement to increase the charm of the *shite's* arm movements and to enhance the picture-like poses of the dance.

The dancing is an essential part of the Nō plays, so that every play (with but one exception) has a dance or at least an action resembling a dance. The dance is always placed in the most important moment of the play—when a climax is reached. It is a symbol to represent beautiful musical and poetic feelings by the graceful movements of body and limbs. Each dance has its own content, i.e. to convey a suitable charm according to the value of the character. There are nine varieties of dancing, but these cannot be taken up in detail. The dance of the Nō is very different from what we think of in connexion with the European idea of dancing. It is performed by a series of gliding steps, accompanied with graceful gestures and occasional stamps of the foot: the steps are in series of three, five, and seven along a line.

The walk of Nō is peculiar: the toes are raised, the foot pushed along, and the toes again laid upon the floor. It must be seen to be known, but it is to this deliberate step that much of the charm of Nō is due. On the other hand, the gliding run reminds one of birds or ships—it is immensely stirring. There are various kinds of dancing, exciting, sober, picturesque, serene. And these dances are interrupted every now and then with periods of quiet, when a pose is struck and held for some time. Each pose makes a new picture. It stops just short of theatrical effect, and

is the essence of restraint and refinement. The rhythm is punctuated with stamps of the feet, which seem to add a note of virility in what might otherwise appear as too negative. Then there is the use of gestures which add greatly to the dance—the swaying and throwing of the sleeve, the holding and waving of the omnipresent fan, which must also act so often as a stage property. Immensely pathetic is the gesture used to express weeping, just the bringing up of the hand and forearm before the eyes with head lowered. Every movement counts singly and yet gives the effect of a whole.

At the end of the play, when the actors, chorus, and musicians walk off slowly and in silence, there is something ghost-like in their dignified step. It seems to speak of invisible things. Time is lost, space remains, but a space which is not of this world.

There is also the occasional raising of the body on the toes at certain times, which seems to increase not only the size of the actor but the emotion of the spectator.

In the discussion of the dance mention must be made of the theory of *jo-ha-kyū*, which is a matter of *tempo* in Nō. *Jo* is the introduction of the dance, the preparation as it were which calms the mind. It is followed by a slow measure, which we would call *andante*, but this gradually increases in time and fuses with *kyū*, which is

quick measure. At times, as in the *Ki* or demon plays, the quick *allegro* turns into a *presto*, when the rhythm of the music and the steps and attitudes of the dance all hurry on to a dramatic final. Seami symbolises these as skin, flesh, and bones. In the dance the beautiful appearance is the skin, skill in dancing and acting is the flesh, but the power of understanding is the bones. These three are necessary to the highest expression. Something more than words must be felt in the *Nō*. This something more is the measure of expression, *tempo*. Some *Nō* possess it much more highly than others. To understand *jo-ha-kyū* is to realise the *tempo* of a *Nō* play which makes for a greater appreciation.

MASKS

Masks are used in the *Nō* plays by the main actor, the *shite*, and his companions (*tsure* and *tomo*), but the *waki* or other characters never use them. The *shite* is always masked when playing the part of a woman or an old man.

Masks had been used in the *Gigaku* and *Bugaku* (early dance forms). These had been introduced from China and Korea, but the *Nō* masks are purely Japanese.

The masks are made of paulownia wood, and many of them and the finest are from one thousand to twelve hundred years old.

It is wonderful what the Nō mask can represent in emotion by its expressionless expression—youth, beauty, love, anger, ferocity, jealousy.

There are certain classes of masks for the different characters, such as *rōjin* masks for the aged, *otoko* (male), *onna* (female), *shinbutsu* (deities and Buddhas), and *henge* (demons). But among the *onna* masks there are again various ones, as they are used for young, beautiful, joyous women, or for unhappy ones, for elderly women, for very aged ones, or for mothers. Again, the *otoko* masks may represent young men or old. Besides, there are special masks for use in one play only, such as in "Semimaru," "Atsumori," "Kagekiyo," "Yamauba," "Komachi," etc.

It seems at times as if the mask lives; there is an indescribable charm about it which must be seen to be realised. A certain real unreality is imparted to the whole character and gives an elusive impression which is quite Buddhist in its effect. The Nō without the mask in certain plays would be impossible. As Umewaka Minoru says: "The longer you look at a good mask the more charged with life it becomes. A common actor cannot use a really good mask. He cannot make himself one with it. A great actor makes it live."

A word must be said about the enacting of women by men. Like the appreciation of the Ho and Ha, which comes later in one's education in Nō appreciation, so it is with the enacting of

the women's parts by men—the beauty of the masked woman grows upon one. A certain ideality is attained, eternal woman rather than an individual woman arrests us—the reality of this ordinary world and ordinary people disappears. We seem to be living in another world made of beauty.

I referred before to *Yūgen*, of which we hear much in the discussion about *Nō*. What is *Yūgen*? It is the identification of thought and action, making the true reality of the *Nō*. Seami calls it the actor's flower, and he says that if the flower be lacking in the actor's impersonation there will be no beauty. So it is necessary for him to identify himself with the underlying reality, and thus to uncover the *Yūgen*. Mr. Iwao Kongo has told me that when acting *Komachi* he is *Komachi*, that he has completely identified himself; he is not acting, but has become *Komachi* herself. And no one can see him in this or in any other part without realising that his *Yūgen* or flower is indeed in full bloom. *Yūgen* is the spirit which makes its complete expression in beauty. It is said that we should "forget the theatre and look at the *Nō*. Forget the *Nō* and look at the actor. Forget the actor and look at the idea (or spirit). Forget the idea and you will understand the *Nō*." *Nō* actors begin to play when they are very young: *kokata* parts of young boys for emperors or Imperial personages are

never played in the Nō by adult actors. Gradually the youth attains subtleness of body, physical and mental poise, and skill in singing and dancing. When his interpretation is saturated with *Yūgen*, then he has become a master of the Nō.

But besides *Yūgen* in the Nō there is *Yūkyō*. Seami says it is to play as far as madness, that is, to play in an ecstasy when the self is forgotten in enjoyment. For example, in "Miidera," when the mad mother is enjoying poetically the flowers and the moon, it is not so much her sorrow as the identification of her mind with beauty which is the predominant idea.

The plot of a Nō is seldom logical; all kinds of contradictions occur in a short Nō play, but we do not care, for the spirit of the *Yūkyō* makes us blind to all illogicalities. It is not reason but beauty that we are seeking.

In addition to *Yūgen* and *Yūkyō* in the Nō, we find *Kurai*. *Kurai* is an emotional quality or atmosphere—a subtle feeling or motive. What makes the *Kurai* of each Nō?

Some assert that it is made by the use of the masks, others that it depends upon the costumes, still others insist that it is due to the music; but *Kurai* is not any one of these. It is a kind of *Yūgen*—to abandon power and arrive at the essence. All elements of the Nō must flow together and make the *tempo* and flavour of that particular Nō.

Besides *Yūgen* and *Yūkyō*, Seami considered *Ran-i*, the expression of maturity in the Nō. It has the flavour of the simplicity we find in Zen or in Haiku poetry. Seami symbolised *Yūgen* with the maple-tree and *Ran-i* with an old cedar which stands straight. Freedom is the expression of *Ran-i*, the subtle use of irregular rhythm to enhance the emotional feeling. The essence of *Ran-i* is free expression of spirit; it is, to use a Buddhist thought, the spirit of the Mahayana which pervades the Nō as it does all forms of Japanese art.

RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE UPON THE Nō

1. *Shinto*

We find in the Nō plays all the religious influence which Japan knew at the time of their composition—the myths of the gods, nature spirits, Shinto, and Buddhism. In the Shinto plays we have the earliest form of the Nō, for the Nō originated from the religious dances which were performed to do homage to the gods. Pilgrimages to shrines and temples were of the greatest importance in the lives of the people, and at the Shinto temples the *Kagura* was sung and danced. The origin of the *Kagura* is from the story of the sun-goddess, Amaterasu, who hid herself in a cave, thus plunging the world in

darkness. Many deities assembled before the cave, performing a dance which finally made the goddess come out of it, with the result that the world was flooded again with light. As this came about through music and dance, the belief arose that gods and goddesses were pleased with music and dancing, which gradually came to be performed for their benefit. So the first Nō were those performed for the gods. In a programme of five plays performed on a Nō day we have seen that the first Nō, the Shinji or god play, has to do with the gods, and is the first to be given. However, these plays are more or less mixed with Buddhist elements, so that it is sometimes very difficult to say what is purely a Shinto play.

We find in these plays that great emphasis is set upon the shrine, and a visit to it is regarded as a meritorious deed, for the shrine being the residence of the god is holy. As to the gods themselves, we have those belonging to the mythical history of Japan—the heavenly gods, as we find them in the stories of “Awaji” and “Tama-no-i”; the gods of the sea, as in “Sumino-e”; the nature gods of Thunder (Raiden), of the Wind, and of Rice. The sun-goddess, Amaterasu, is the deity of a number of plays, so is her brother Susanowo. There are also the ancestral gods of the Imperial family and of princely families. We also behold heavenly

creatures such as the angel in "Hagoromo," the dragons, the tengu, and other nature-spirits.

It was the priest Gyōgi who promulgated Ryōbu-Shinto, which was further propagated by Kōbō Daishi; the idea is that the gods and the Buddhas are really one. "Whether one says gods or Buddhas, there is no difference between the water and waves." So we find in the Shinto plays a mixture of Buddhism. Temman-Tenjin is a Shinto god, but he is also called a manifestation of Amida and of Kwannon. There are others who have their places in both Shinto and Buddhist pantheons. The Buddhist conception, that everything will attain to Buddhahood, including animals and plants, is also found in Shinto. In many Shinto plays the god is found in the guise of a man, who later reveals his divinity to the other character in the play, who is often a priest or a courtier. In the second scene of the god revealed, he is depicted in a splendid manner designed to give both majesty and mystery. At this time the god dances, and the high point of the play is reached. The dance in these plays is full of religious sentiment—in fact, the very acme of dignity combined with beauty. He comes to show himself to his devotee as a splendid apparition of deity; through his very appearance he confers a boon, drives away all that is bad, and draws as a magnet all that is good. Above all, he brings to the Imperial house and to the

country peace, happiness, and protection. Japan is the land of the gods. She must give them respect and reverence.

As mentioned before, there is a close relation between Shinto and Buddhism, so naturally the gods of Shinto and the Buddhas of Buddhism are friendly and work together. The gods support Buddhism, they help people, preserve marriage, are patrons of poetry, hear and answer prayer, and sometimes perform miracles for their believers. They take pleasure in receiving offerings, look smilingly upon pilgrimages to the shrines, and upon festivals held in their honour. Especially do they appreciate the *Kagura* dance. The dance is the medium for bringing together men and women and gods, uniting them spiritually. In return for worship and respect, they bestow—not just from the point of view of return payment but as a free-will blessing—help, protection, happiness, and prosperity—above all, the consciousness of a relationship between themselves and their worshippers. All are One. This consciousness of Unity is the stronghold of the feeling of nationalism which is so strong a feature of Shintoism. In the Shinto Nō plays we get glimpses of this, and understand why the Japanese use the word “divine” in speaking of these plays, for they reveal through music and dance the soul of Shinto.

2. *Buddhist*

Much that has been said of Shinto can be applied to Buddhism. We find Buddhist thought permeating all classes of plays, for even if Buddhist priests did not actually write the *Nō* plays, their devotees did, and they must have received help and advice from them, and Buddhist thought was abroad everywhere among the people.

The teaching of the *Hokke sutra* (*Saddharma Pundarika*) had a strong influence on the plays. The *sutra* in itself was considered to possess miraculous virtue.

In "Ukai" the priest says: "Picking up a stone from the river, I write a word on it from the *Hokke Kyo* (*sutra*), and throw it into the waves. By this merit, the lost soul will arise."

In "Basho" the woman who represents the spirit of the *Basho* (banana) plant says: "I now meet with the grateful teaching (*Hokke sutra*) which it is difficult to meet with, therefore I am worshipping and offering flowers, for I am trying to make a relationship with the *sutra*. How grateful I am to hear the *sutra* read. A woman like myself and even those plants and trees which have no feeling can think of ourselves as saved." In "Hyakuman" the chorus says: "How grateful we should be to the power of the great law (of the *Hokke sutra*), by which the mother and son have met." In "Eguchi"

the priest says: "I will hold a Buddhist service (reading of *Hokke*) for the repose of her soul, that she may attain Buddhahood."

The teaching of Amida and his Pure Land is found throughout the *Nō*. In "Atsumori" the priest says: "Since this is so, I will perform all night the rites of the prayer for the dead, and calling upon Amida's name will pray again for the salvation of Atsumori. . . . Is it not written that one prayer will wipe away ten thousand sins? Ceaselessly I have performed the ritual of the Holy Name that clears all sin away." *

In "Sanemori" the priest says: "Let us make special invocation of the Holy Name for his spirit"; and the old warrior says: "Paradise is eternal and life is endless. How joyously people should continue their prayers, for someone is born in Gokuraku at every prayer." In "Kashiwazaki" we hear that "in the voice reciting the Nembutsu (calling on the name of Amida) there is the light of Amida waiting to receive all sinners. Let us pray to be embraced in the light of Amitābha, relying upon the power of the Nembutsu, which is a saving boat taking us to the golden shore where there is the consummation of happiness." Amida is indeed the Buddha of Eternal Life. In "Sumidagawa" the Nembutsu is invoked, and in "Seigwanji" we hear: "Only let us pray Namu Amida Butsu

* Mr. Waley's translation, *The Nō Plays of Japan*.

and nothing else." I might go on, quoting from many plays which lay stress upon the efficacy of invoking the Nembutsu.

The third Buddhist note in the Nō concerns the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, popularly known as Kwannon. In the Nō "Tamura" Tamuramaro says that victory was obtained through the power of Kwannon, and that therefore eternal gratitude should be given to her. In "Mori-hisa" we read: "In thy great mercy, O Kwannon, thou hast never turned away those who call upon thy name. I pray that I may be led to Paradise. Thy great mercy reaches even to hell." The benevolence of Kwannon permeates the entire play of "Yuya."

Again, we have the worship of Shakamuni in such plays as "Hyakuman," "Ama," and "Kashiwazaki"; of Maitreya and his Tushita heaven; of the Bodhisattva Monju (Mañjuśrī) and Fugen (Samantabhadra).

The cult of Shugendo or Yamabushi is also found in the Nō, laying the emphasis on its miraculous prayers, "Ataka," "Funa-Benkei," and "Aoi no Ue" being fine examples.

Lastly, we see the spirit of the Zen sect, of which we get glimpses in "Yamauba," "Hokazo," and "Sotoba Komachi." "Yamauba" is said to have been written by the Zen priest Ikkyū. It reveals the fact that in order to see the moon of Buddhism, all false knowledge and discrimina-

tion must be cast aside. The courtesan in the play represents a sentient being searching for enlightenment, but Yamauba (the old woman of the mountain) represents enlightenment itself.

The Hoka priests are filled with Zen thought. "Thought alone is Truth, and from the mind spring all component things." "Neither in 'Yea' nor 'Nay' is the Truth found. There is none but may be saved at last. . . . Not man alone, the woods and fields show happy striving. . . . In the wind of the hill-top, in the valley's song, in the film of night, in the mist of morning, is it proclaimed that Thought alone Was, Is, and Shall be." *

We find now that the chief Buddhist ideas presented in the *Nō* are as follows :

1. The idea of interpenetration of the two worlds, material and ideal, as taught by the Kegon school of Buddhism in the *Avatamsaka sutra*: the person who has passed from this world easily returns. The two worlds on each side of death overlap each other. We have many examples of this ; indeed, all of the Dan or battle pieces, the second class of plays on a programme, illustrate this. The villager of the first scene becomes the ghost, or, as I prefer to call it, the spirit of the departed warrior, as for example, in "Sanemori," "Ebira," "Atsumori," "Tadanori," "Tsunemasa." Many of the love

* Mr. Waley's translation of "The Hoka Priests."

romances are also examples of this, such as "Izutsu," "Nishikigi," and "Kinuta."

2. The idea of consoling the dead by reading a *sutra*, and thereby the dead attaining Buddhahood. The favourite *sutra* for this purpose is either the *Hokke* (*Saddharma Pundarika*) or the *Hannya* (*Prajñāpāramitā*).

3. The idea that all may attain to Buddhahood, including plants, trees, and animals. In the play "Basho" the banana plant is enlightened. In "Kochō," by the devotion to the *Hokke sutra*, a butterfly also attains, and says: "How wonderful it is that, by the virtue of the supreme *sutra* (the *Hokke*), sentient and non-sentient beings without discrimination can attain Buddhahood. I attain at last to Buddhahood." The butterfly is one of the Bodhisattvas who fosters the play spirit. In "Fuji" the spirit of the wistaria cries: "By the rain of salvation of the *Hokke sutra* I was stimulated to come here and bloom. I too am under the mercy of Buddha"; and the priest says: "Your heart has now come to bloom as a flower of Dharma, and all non-sentient beings such as grasses and trees are able to attain to Buddhahood. Deep is the teaching of the Good Law." In the "Kakitsubata" the spirit of the iris-flower goes to the Pure Land of the Western Paradise. In "Yuki" the snow declares: "I too rely upon the light of the beneficent Buddha. I have no doubt of the

excellent teaching of the *Hokke sutra*. Please lead me to the light of salvation."

4. The idea that even evil beings, such as demons and tengu, may attain to Buddhahood.

5. The Tendai conception of the oneness of all living beings and Buddha.

6. The belief in the Pure Land and the virtue of reciting the Nembutsu.

7. The belief in the mercy of Avalokiteśvara and other Bodhisattvas.

The Buddhism of the Nō play is the Buddhism of the Mahayana, the Great Vehicle. In Hinayana Buddhism *karma* rules, but in Mahayana religious yearnings may have full play and are full of imagination.

The chief characteristics of Mahayana Buddhism are these :

1. Salvation or enlightenment is for all. All may become Bodhisattvas and ultimately attain Buddhahood and Nirvana.

2. Bodhisattvas voluntarily renounce Nirvana in order to work for the enlightenment of their fellow-beings.

3. Everything in the universe is the manifestation of the Dharmakaya.

4. The world of suffering of Hinayana Buddhism may be converted through union in and with the Dharmakaya and through enlightenment.

5. While not ignoring ethical precepts, the emphasis is laid upon meditation for wisdom in

individual deliverance, and upon loving-kindness in stepping in the footprints of the Buddha.

The Nō plays are saturated with the spirit of Buddhism. To appreciate Nō fully it is necessary to know something of both Buddhism and Shinto, of Japanese history, and of its language and literature, and above all to have a love of Japanese art in general, and a feeling of kinship with the Japanese people. But even without all these, Nō, as I have said before, may be appreciated as a picture—a picture which is full of life, colour, and movement. Certainly it is one of the most delightful arts in Japan to-day. Not only the aristocracy, *literati*, and warriors of the feudal days loved it, but even in these modern times we find Nō halls well filled with cultured people of all classes, including an occasional European who has come to enjoy the wonderful pictorial representations which become as a gate to him to approach nearer to the hearts and minds of the Japanese. The finest culture of the Japanese is to be found in the Nō, and it is prompted by the religious spirit. Without Shinto or Buddhism, Nō would be like an empty cup. Nō is the key that gives entrance to the inner life. To understand it fully is to attain a kind of *satori*, as Zen would put it.

After all, what is Nō? Is it drama or poetry, or opera or dance? It is a union of all these, a combination of dancing, singing, and poetry.

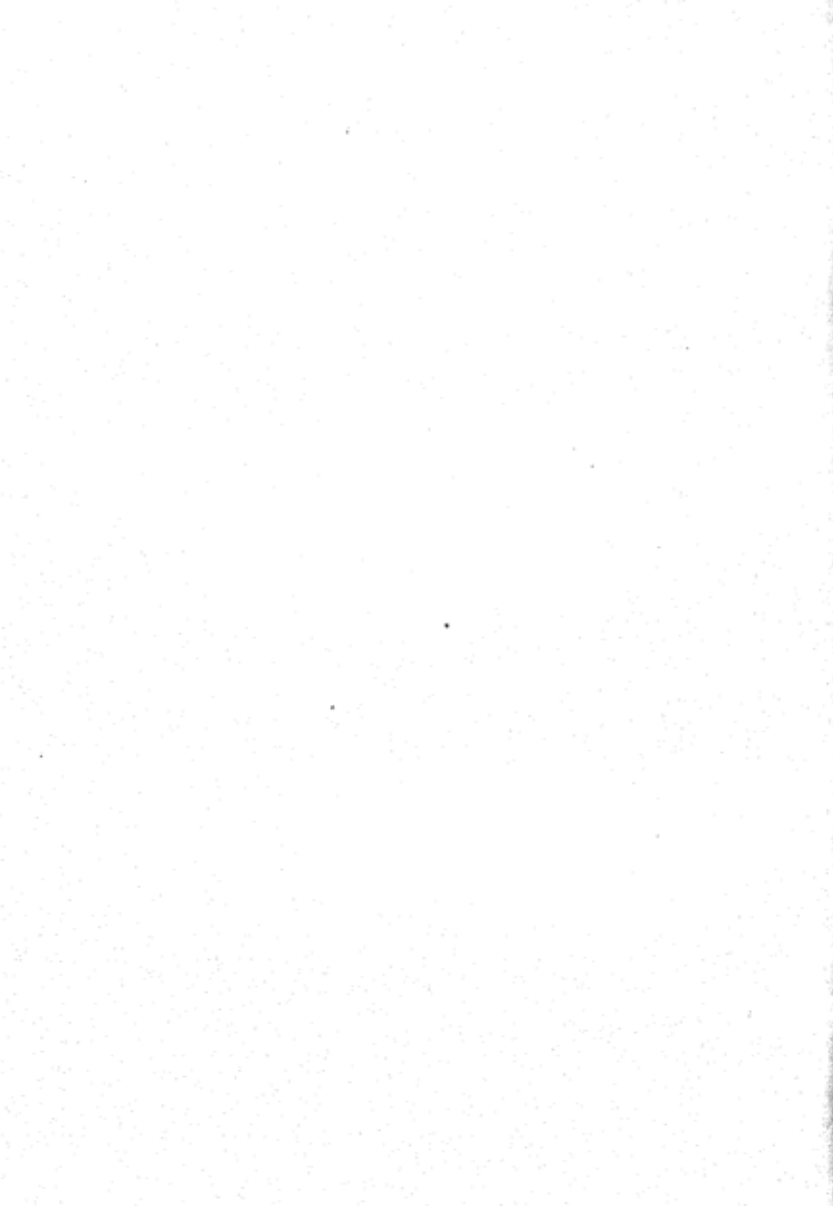
And it is a picture. I think that as a picture it can appeal to the European spectator. To understand the music and the wording, unless very superficially, is difficult except to a cultivated Japanese, but the picture presented—a combination of dance enhanced by many subtleties of gesture, the colour and richness of the costumes, the personality, rather the impersonality, of the acting of the chief actor which makes up his *Yūgen*—all these pictorial qualities are what can make *Nō* fascinating to the European.

Some lay great stress on the dancing, and think that it is of paramount importance, indeed everything; but even to the European spectator, besides the picture presented, I think that the rise and swell of the singing will promote a certain charm. In truth, as I have stressed before, the *Nō* is a unity of music, dance, and poetry, and as the chief actor blends these together most perfectly the *Nō* rises to its greatest height of beauty.

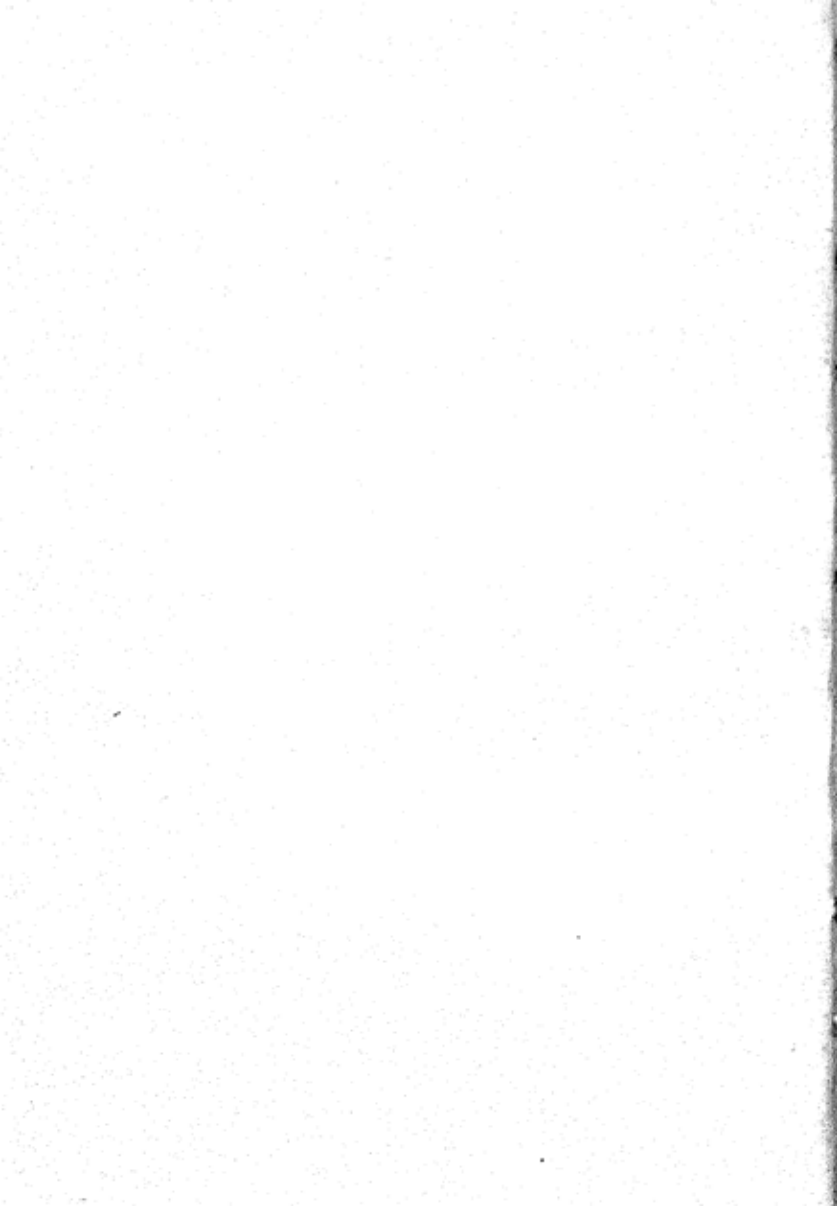
Nō is often compared to Greek drama, but this is not quite correct, for in true drama there is not such a forceful dependence upon one actor as in *Nō*, for there must be in the drama at least two leading actors, thereby making dialogue important. But in the *Nō*, the epic or lyrical song of the chorus singing for him receives the emphasis. Both the Greek drama and the *Nō* use the masks, but the making and wearing of the masks are quite different.

In regard to action the drama develops it and enhances it, but the Nō wishes to simplify action, to get the maximum effect with minimum action. Nō is not fundamentally dramatic, but it excels in artistic value, producing a single clarified impression embodying some human relation or emotion such as love, compassion, anger, or jealousy, which is then elevated to a plane of universality.

In Japan there are certain roads of escape—escape from the troubles and vexations of this world to another world of art and beauty. The Japanese love these escapes and cherish them. Some of these ways of escape are by means of the tea ceremony, flower arrangement, Buddhist meditation, pilgrimage to holy temples, the contemplation of art objects, the writing of poems, and the singing of them. But one of these ways of escape and one of the most beautiful of them is the Nō. By this road a man may pass into an eternal land, unmasked by illusion, and here his own spirit may commune with the gods, and then return refreshed to our world of relativity.



PLAYS



ARIDŌSHI

By SEAMI MOTOKIYO

Shite : Aridōshi no Myōjin.¹

Waki : Ki no Tsurayuki.

Place : Province of Izumi.

TSURAYUKI : On the road of song, my mind is
intent on poetry.

On the road of song, my mind is intent on poetry.
I am Ki no Tsurayuki. Though I am a poet,
never have

I visited the shrines of Sumiyoshi² and Tama-
tsushima.³

Suddenly, I have thought of visiting the country
of Kii.

Sleeping with dreams,
Travelling while awake,
Such is the journey,
Such is the journey !

In Sekido, I think of the moon as it shone in
the capital which I have left far behind me. I
hear the sound of the bell in this quiet evening, so
I think this place must be quite near a village.
How strange ! The sound has suddenly ceased.

Heavy rain is falling. Alas! my horse has stumbled and lies unconscious. "While the light is dim, Gubijin's ⁴ tears are dropping like rain and my horse, Sui, cannot go." I do not know what to do. I am indeed at my wit's end.

(Aridōshi no Myojin enters wearing taimatsu and carrying an umbrella.)

ARIDŌSHI: The rain of Shosho ⁵ incessantly falls, and the distant temple bell cannot be heard. In such places as temples and shrines, a man has sublime feelings, especially when he hears the bell late at night. At the shrine, there is neither light nor sacred music. Usually there is a Shinto priest in the place where the god resides, but there is no one here. Even though there is no sacred light, still it would not be dark, because of the light given out by the god himself. How lazy the priests are!

TSURAYUKI: I should like to talk with you about the light.

ARIDŌSHI: There is no inn about here. You must go on a little farther.

TSURAYUKI: The night is very dark. I cannot even see in front of me. And my horse has fallen and lost his senses.

ARIDŌSHI: Why did you not get down at this sacred place?

TSURAYUKI: I did not know this was the place to dismount.

ARIDŌSHI: How sacrilegious you were! Then

know this is the shrine of Aridōshi no Myojin. If your presumption were known to him, it would be serious for you.

TSURAYUKI : Strange ! Where then is the shrine ?

ARIDŌSHI : In yonder forest.

TSURAYUKI : You look like a Shinto priest.

ARIDŌSHI : Gazing out from the shadow of the sacred light.

TSURAYUKI : Ah ! I see the shrine.

ARIDŌSHI : Of Aridōshi.

CHORUS : The two columns of the sacred *torii* Are soaring high upward towards the sky. Indeed there is a shrine.

Unknowing though I was,
Yet wrong indeed of me
To pass through here on horse-back.
Truly so. Ah ! truly so.

ARIDŌSHI : What kind of man are you ?

TSURAYUKI : I am Ki no Tsurayuki. I am visiting Sumiyoshi and Tamatsushima.

ARIDŌSHI : If you are truly Tsurayuki, you must compose a poem to offer to the god.

TSURAYUKI : 'Twere easy for an able poet. But how would the god content himself with my simple poem ! However, here is one :

At midnight, when the sky
By dark cloud is covered o'er,
How could I think that the stars
Are always there ?

ARIDŌSHI : At midnight, when the sky
By dark cloud is covered o'er,
How could I think that the stars
Are always there ?

How fine ! How splendid ! It sounds good to my
ordinary mind. Why should not the god accept
it ?

TSURAYUKI : I was not conscious I was sinning
against the god. Such was not my thought.

ARIDŌSHI : Dark clouds and rains of words.

TSURAYUKI : One cloud over the other.

ARIDŌSHI : How could a star be seen ? How
lovely is your poem !

CHORUS : The Waka poem was begun in the
time of the gods.

But now it is practised by living men.

Everybody writes it, especially Tsurayuki ;
The keeper of the poem records at the Court
Selects those that are best,
Congratulating the righteousness
Of the Imperial reign.

We know that the thought of a poem is always
pure

With no element of selfishness.

After the age of the gods

The poems are *choka*, *tanka*, *senjo*, *kompon*,

There are so many forms of poetical style.

The song of the nightingale among the flowers,

The voice of the cicada in the autumn,

What are they but poems ?

My poem composed just now
Has no ill-feeling for the god,
So I think he will accept it,
And you, O Priest, pray accept it.

ARIDŌSHI : And meet with the miracle
Of receiving so fine a poem.

CHORUS : The white horse whose shadow was
reflected

In the clean water of the barrier of Osaka
When helped to rise, how strange ! behold it
walks !

On a branch towards the south
The birds of Etsu ⁶ make their nest.
And the barbarian horse of Ko
Whinnies in the north wind.
Even so the heart of the god
Is made calm by poetry.
Before the holy will of the god
Who is he who will not bow ?

TSURAYUKI : As you are a Shinto priest, will
you read a prayer to please him ?

ARIDŌSHI (*dancing*) : Yes, surely. Now I will
say this prayer, " Kamino shirayu kakemakumo."

TSURAYUKI : That is my offering.

ARIDŌSHI : The scattering snow of purification.

TSURAYUKI : Thrice worshipped.

ARIDŌSHI : Respectfully I worship, and let you
know

That eight virgin dancers are here,
And five Kagura ⁷ musicians.

The dancers waving snowy sleeves
 And cotton-like flowers, they offer
 All to please the divine mind.
 By the will of the god
 We shall be ever more adoring,
 Worshipful and faithful.
 Ah ! there is nothing better than a poem
 To please the divine one.
 How grateful we are !
 The dance of the virgin girls,
 And the music is delightful ;
 The ancient days we remember,
 The days of the rock cave,⁸
 Pleasing the gods with song and dance
 Makes the relation between men and the divine
 ones.

TSURAYUKI : The eight events in the life of the
 Buddha⁹
 Are the culmination of religious life.

ARIDŌSHI : The gods' reign continued seven
 generations.

TSURAYUKI : Then men were honest and
 righteous.

ARIDŌSHI : They had no greed.

CHORUS : Ever since this world began
 Song and dance were pure.

ARIDŌSHI : Tsurayuki's poem reflects the
 purity of his thought.

CHORUS : Indeed, Tsurayuki's poem reflects
 the purity of his thought.

The god has been showing to you
His passing form as a priest.
But now he hides his true form
Behind the beam of the *torii*.
He disappears—we know not whither.

Tsurayuki is happy.
The day has come.
And the poet, in the morning dawn,
Continues his journey.

EBIRA

By SEAMI MOTOKIYO

Shite : (1) A Villager.

(2) The Spirit of Kajiware Kagesuyo.

Waki : A priest.

Place : Province of Settsu.

PRIEST : I want to enjoy the feeling of the spring. It is not a sad thing to travel in the spring-time. I am a priest who has come from the Western country. Never have I been to the capital, so now I am going to enjoy the pleasures of sight-seeing.

With my mind full of thoughts of travel
I started from the sea of Tsukushi.
A long distance by sea I have come.
As I leave it behind
Like cloud waves it appears.
See the smoke rising up
From the pine-tree shore !
The coast is called Suma no ura.
Now at last, I've arrived at the Ikuta river.¹⁰
Now at last, I've arrived at the Ikuta river.

VILLAGER : The river flows swift as an arrow,
And the time passes quickly away.

Flying blossoms and falling leaves
Impermanence reveal !
And yet they are a symbol
Of eternity.
Even in each object of sense
The wise can clearly perceive
The truth of the Middle Path.¹¹
But for ordinary men
How difficult, how hard
To know this truth,
The individualisation of Eternal Truth !
How impermanent are these our lives !

The objects of sense in the world ever changing—
These we adhere to as things of reality ;
But in the ocean of birth and death, they drown
us.

How long shall we wander in this path of dreams ?
This world to us indeed seems permanent and
fixed,
Yet after all, what is it but a road of dreams
To which life after life we must perforce re-
turn ?

PRIEST : I should like to ask you,
Tell me, I pray,
Is yonder plum-tree a famous one ?

VILLAGER : The Quiver Plum-Tree it is called.

PRIEST : Indeed, an interesting name ! and
for how long
Has it been a noted tree ?

VILLAGER : Not really such a famous tree,
But that's the name it has in this locality.

PRIEST : Tell me, I beg, the story of the tree.

VILLAGER : In olden days this grove of Ikuta
Marked the main entrance to the castle,
Where more than one hundred thousand
Brave soldiers of the Heike were encamped.
Among the Genji soldiers was Kajiwarra Heiza
Kagetoki
And also Kajiwarra Genda Kagesuye.

They found some plum-flowers,
Blossoms differing from others ;
So each one picked a branch
And placed it in his quiver.
Then as they fought, easily seen they were.
Like a brave warrior
Kagesuye fought with a thankful heart.
He gave the flower its name,
The Holy Tree of Hachiman,
Since then, according to tradition,
The Quiver Plum-Tree. Regard it well !

PRIEST : Indeed, 'tis true, it is a famous tree,
And this a memorable place for trees and soldiers ;
And so the story flows all down the years.

VILLAGER : The spring rain hears the name of
ancient days ;

PRIEST : Kagesuye's fame rose high and great.

VILLAGER : The young plum-trees showed
white their flowers fair.

PRIEST: The blossoms of the quiver. Until now.

CHORUS: The hero's name lies in the flowers' shadow,
The hero's name lies in the blossoms' shadow.

When a man gives up his soldier's life
His name still lives to these days,
Like the river his name remains for ever,
Delicate and fragile, but it remains for ever.

Last year in two battles the Taira were victorious,
At Muroyama in Harima,
At Mizoshima in Bitchu,
Soldiers of fourteen provinces ;
In Sanyodo and in Nankaido
One hundred and thousand strong,
They were encamped at Ichinotani in Settsu.

VILLAGER: As far as to the east is Ikuta no mai
And to the west Ichino tani,
For three ri, soldiers were lined ;
And out on the water
Thousands of vessels were floating.
On the land, the red banners
Were fluttering, fluttering in the spring breeze ;
Like a red flame burning in the sky
They fluttered in the breeze.
Before the castle stretched the sea,
Behind, the mountains braced its back,
And to the left, Akashi,

The ships were sailing to and fro,
And the sound of the rowing boats
Was like the cries of the water plover.

CHORUS : 'Twas early in the spring of the third
month ;

At Suma, the young buds of cherry-trees
Were all covered up in the thin cold snow
And could not come to blossom yet, alas !
In Ikuta's grove, plum-flowers blossomed ;
Should one bloom come out, they made rejoicing,
As marching off, they hurried to the front.

The army of friends numbered sixty thousand
And divided into two parts.
Taira was attacked on the front,
Taira was attacked on the back.
From sea and mountain side,
As far as the coast of Suma,
The castle was pressed on all sides.

VILLAGER : In fish-scales and crane-wings
style.¹²

CHORUS : On the mountain behind us
The pine-trees are growing,
There are traces of lingering snow,
While the cranes in a flock
Are leaving the nest
And spreading their wings like a cloud :
On the shore are fishermen many,
Clad in various garb ;
On the fishing-boats

The fire is burning.
Storm and wave, wave and storm
Grow calm on Suma's beach.
There are boats drawing near,
Coming near to the fields,
Coming near to the mountains,
And boats like heavenly birds.

CHORUS (*for the Priest*) :

It is evening now,
The plum-blossoms shine
In the pale moonlight ;
Let me lodge here, I beg.

VILLAGER : I know not about lodging ;
Wait beneath the flowers.

CHORUS : Who are you that speak to me ?

VILLAGER : Shall I keep myself secret ?
Then know I am not a living man,
My shadow exists not in this world.

CHORUS : Under the evening moonlight,
Do you wish me to pray for the dead ?

VILLAGER : Behold me—the spirit of Kagesuye.

CHORUS : It is karma thus to meet you under
shadow of a plum-tree,
Let me stay a while in your house,
For in this world I am sad,
Like the nightingale, who when the time comes
Must leave its nest in sadness.
Ah, this is the flower of Ebira !
This is the flower of Ebira.

(*Interval.*)

PRIEST : Turning the dark robe of the night
It grows late on the Ikuta river,
Late it grows on the Ikuta river ;
The gurgling of the stream sounds clear ;
Sleeping in the shadow of the flower-tree,
Sleeping in the shadow of the flower-tree.

(The spirit of Kagesuye appears.)

KAGESUYE : One part of the soul returns to
the positive principle,¹³
The other part returns to the negative :
Attachment to this world
Brings the soldiers back,
Wandering over the battle-field,
Wandering over the Ikuta river.
The river of Takuroku is turned to blood,
Shields float on the bloody waves.

CHORUS : Crushing the bones are the sharp
sword-blades,
Great is the pain and keen.
Within my hand the sun and moon
Both seem to lie. My eyes,
Dazzled they are while my head
Suffers Shurado's¹⁴ pain.
Ah ! look upon me with pity ;
Look upon me with pity.

PRIEST : How wonderful to see a young soldier
carrying a quiver,
Adorned as it is with a blossoming plum-
branch,
How gay he looks ! Who can he be ?

KAGESUYE : I shall not hide anything from you.
I am Genda Kagesuye.
In this world I ought not to be lingering.
We were destined to meet,
You a priest and I a spirit,
I am listening to your preaching.
But when I wish you to pray for my happiness,
Alas ! my enemy, the passion to fight, overcomes
me.

Look, reverend sir !

PRIEST : Truly, it is a frightful sight,
Swords are falling like rain,

KAGESUYE : As if destroying heaven and earth.

PRIEST : Mountains tremble—

KAGESUYE : The sea—

PRIEST : Thunder and lightning together—

KAGESUYE : Terrible wind—

CHORUS : The red banners look like bright
flame.

The soldiers return to this world,
Living again on the battle-field ;
The sea is stirred up and makes waves ;
The mountain villages, the seas and river,
Are turned into a great field of battle.
How dreadful ! How terrible it is !

KAGESUYE : Even in such confusion, let us
Quietly look for a time.

CHORUS : Yes, in confusion like this,
Let us calm for a time
Our spirits, and look.

CHORUS (*as Kagesuye dances*) :

The place is Ikuta. The time is spring.
As in the old days when the battle raged,
He plucks a branch of plum, and in his quiver
The fine young soldier places it.
Now with blossoms decorated,
Quiver, flower, and Genda himself
All hurry into battle before others.
The flower of mind and the flower of the plum
Both going ahead,
How beautiful ! But wait—
The flower falls. The enemy seeing it
Behold a fine opponent and wish to fight,
Genda is surrounded by eight horsemen.

KAGESUYE : My helmet is thrown away.

CHORUS : Untied is his hair.

KAGESUYE : The rear, guarded it is by three
attending soldiers.

CHORUS : And the enemy attacks from the
front.

KAGESUYE : He cuts me down into two,
The enemy from my sidewise cut turns aside.

CHORUS : Spiders' legs, tying rope, cranes'
wings,

He fights with his skill of sword play.
Watching such a scene, dreams are awakened.
Now, travelling monk, I must go.
Farewell !

As a flower returns to its root,
And a bird to his old nest,

PRAYER FOR ENLIGHTENMENT 67

So must I go.

The bird returns to his old nest.

O pray, I beg you—for my enlightenment,

For my enlightenment, I ask you, pray.

NININ SHIZUKA ¹⁵

(*The Two Shizukas*)

By SEAMI MOTOKIYO

Shite : Shizuka.

Tsure : Natsumi no onna (a herb-gathering woman).

Waki : Katsute no Shinshoku (a Shinto priest).

Place : Province of Yamato.

THE SHINTO PRIEST : I am he who serves the
god of Katsute in Yoshino. Many festivals are
held in his honour.

But on the seventh of January,

We offer young plants to him.

This is the very day.

So I will tell my maid-servant to go to Natsumi-
gawa.

(*To Natsumi onna, who has entered*)

Go quickly then to Natsumigawa.

NATSUMI ONNA : As I gaze, I see Yoshino
yama ¹⁶

Covered with white pine-needles,

Looking like snow everlasting.

In the mountains remote the snow never melts,

The pine-needles remain white for ever.

In the fields young plants are gathered,
For the season of plucking arrives,
But though spring rain is falling and flower-buds
open,

The young herbs remain under the snow.

How long will it cover the field ?

Now spring has really begun.

The mist rises. The snow falls away,

And the road, the road is clear.

(The spirit of Shizuka appears.)

SHIZUKA : I should like to speak to you.

NATSUMI ONNA : Who are you ?

SHIZUKA : If you are returning to Yoshino, will
you take a message for me ?

NATSUMI ONNA : What can I do for you ?

SHIZUKA : I wish to send a message to the
Shinto priest and others. I grieve for my past
sin. Please beg of them to copy a *sutra* for me,
and to pray for my salvation. Please deliver the
message without fail.

NATSUMI ONNA : Indeed, how sad ! Yes. I
will give your message. But what name shall I
tell them ?

SHIZUKA : Deliver my message, and then if I
am doubted I will tell my name. But give the
message surely.

CHORUS *(as the spirit of Shizuka disappears)* :
Wandering clouds in the evening breeze
Disappear like a writing which has been erased.
A spirit disappears like the wandering clouds.

NATSUMI ONNA : How dreadful ! I must haste and tell my master. (*To the Shinto Priest*) I have returned.

THE SHINTO PRIEST : Tell me what happened.

NATSUMI ONNA : A strange thing happened, so I became late in returning.

THE SHINTO PRIEST : Tell me what happened.

NATSUMI ONNA : By the side of Natsumigawa a woman appeared, I know not whence she came. She asked me to give a message to the people of Yoshino, especially to those who serve in the shrine, saying that her sin is so great she wishes to be prayed for, that she may be blessed with a *sutra* written for her. But as I felt this to be so strange, I did not believe her.

(*Now she is possessed by the spirit of Shizuka, and speaks for Shizuka.*)

Oh, why do you say it is strange ?
As you do not believe I am sad,
For I asked you my message to give.
When they are viewed from afar
The mountain flowers are clouds,
But when we approach they are gone ;
Into cherry-flowers they've turned.
How sorry I am you doubt me.

THE SHINTO PRIEST : It is beyond words.
How strange you are ! Have you become mad ?
By whose spirit are you possessed ? Tell me who it is, and I will pray for your soul earnestly.

NATSUMI ONNA AS SHIZUKA : I will conceal

nothing from you. Then know that I am the one who served Hogwandono (Yoshitsune).¹⁷

THE SHINTO PRIEST: Among the many who served him,
Only Juro Gonnokami remained
Unto the last at Koromogawa.
Tsune Kanezane quietly buried the corpse of
Hogwan;
Then cutting open his stomach he jumped
Into the burning fire,
Most loyal to the end.

NATSUMI ONNA: But I did not serve to the end.
Being a woman, I went with him
Only this far.
Alas! Here I was left behind;
Since then with tears my sleeves are wet.
(*She weeps.*)

CHORUS (*for Shizuka*):
Ashamed I am to tell my name.
I'll whisper it softly. Now hear:
'Tis Shizuka.

THE SHINTO PRIEST: Indeed, are you Shizuka Gozen?
If so, she was a graceful dancer. Dance then for me,
And I will pray for your soul's salvation with all my heart.

NATSUMI ONNA (*as Shizuka*): The robe I wore then was presented to the deity of Katsute.

THE SHINTO PRIEST: What colour was it?

NATSUMI ONNA (*as Shizuka*): The skirt was of seco-silk.

THE SHINTO PRIEST: And how about the coat?

NATSUMI ONNA (*as Shizuka*): It was of an autumnal flower design, symbol of the world of which I was tired.

THE SHINTO PRIEST: Strange indeed! Open the treasure house. (*The robe is brought before him.*) Yes, without doubt. Here is the very robe. Now wear it and dance quickly. All draw near and look. The lady Shizuka is going to dance.

(*Natsumi onna puts on the robe, and having done so, she is joined by the spirit of Shizuka, attired in a similar robe.*)

NATSUMI ONNA: Alas! I am too diffident to sing to you. I cannot forget old times.

THE SHINTO PRIEST: What remembrance do you hold within your heart?

NATSUMI ONNA: Now the time approaches.

THE SHINTO PRIEST: Yes, Shizuka dances.

NATSUMI ONNA: The name of the river in Yoshino means herb-picking.

THE SPIRIT OF SHIZUKA: But think not of me as a herb-picking woman.

(*She stands beside Natsumi onna in the guise of Shizuka, and the two Shizukas dance together.*)

CHORUS : Near the pool of the river,
In mountain shadows,
Are her fragrant sleeves,
Are her fragrant sleeves.
Yoshitsune condemned as a traitor,
Followed by an army sent for capture,
Took a boat and went away
From Watanabe and Kanzaki ;
Gale and storm, storm and gale
Pursued him ;
His boat returned,
He thought 'twas the will of heaven.

CHORUS (*for Shizuka*) :
Was the fault his ?
His heart was filled with regret.
The road ever narrowed. There was no escape.
We came to this mountain,
The time was spring,
Under Miyoshino's flowers shelter we took ;
I was not at peace,
Exposed to the night I slept not.
Our dreams broken, we were scattered like flowers,
Now rising, now falling.
I saw before me the way of this floating world,
How sorrowfully we had to leave the mountain
behind.

THE TWO SHIZUKAS : In olden days, the
Emperor Kiyomigahara

CHORUS : Was attacked by Prince Otomo,
He came to this mountain for shelter ;

Like him, we were fugitives under the snow-like
flowers,

Wandering from place to place, unable refuge to
find.

We fled always like storm-driven waves ;

Waves return, but never shall we come back to
this place.

In the mountain of Miyoshino

The cherry-flowers fall like snow and rain ;

Even here, so far away, we were restless

This spring night.

The hazy moon retreats farther

Into the remote mountains.

But we ! We must move on.

THE TWO SHIZUKAS : In China, Sakoku the
poet ^{is} gave himself up to the love of flowers.

CHORUS : We travellers, journeying under the
lingering moon

With fate unknown,

Were not like the ancient poet,

Who stepped with regret on the flowers ;

For us the spring night was not quiet,

In the mountain wind the flowers fell,

Which we fancied to be the noise

Of those searching for us fugitives ;

Looking ever backward and travelling quickly

To the remote part of Yoshino mountain.

Ah, that was not yet the end of my sorrow.

Summoned by Yoshitsune,

Come quickly, he said,

Shizuka, my graceful dancer.

My heart did not sway flowingly

Like the sleeves of my dancing dress.

I sang an old song as I yearned for old days :

“ A humble woman turning and turning a spool
of thread,

Is there no way to make old days come back ? ”

THE TWO SHIZUKAS : Alas ! recollection of the
past.

CHORUS : Do not grieve for the past to return,
Think only of the brave man who sacrificed him-
self.

He never can be forgotten !

THE TWO SHIZUKAS : Brave Samurai !

CHORUS : Everything in life must follow its
fate :

This is the way in life. It cannot be helped.

Like the mountain cherry,

Scattered it must be.

The wind blowing over the pine-trees

Disperses the flowers like snow.

Oh, pray for Shizuka's salvation !

Oh, pray for Shizuka's salvation !

Life is not so real as we think, like the moon
shining on the water. Is the reflection real or
unreal ? It is real. It is unreal.

KASHIWAZAKI

By ENAMI NO SAEMON

Shite : The wife of the master of Kashiwazaki and later appearing as the crazy mother of Hanawaka.

Waki : A samurai, Kotaro.

Kokata : Hanawaka, the son of the master of Kashiwazaki. A priest, the abbot of Zenkoji.

Places : Kashiwazaki, in the Province of Echigo, and Zenkoji Temple in Shinano.

SCENE 1. *At Kashiwazaki.*

KOTARO : To my home, of which I have been dreaming,

I am now returning. I am now returning.

I am Kotaro, in the service of my master, Kashiwazaki in Echigo. He was staying in Kamakura, in connexion with a law-suit. But he caught cold, and soon after he passed away. His son Master Hanawaka was also staying with him in Kamakura. He became a monk in grief from being parted with his father. I do not know where he has gone. I am hastily returning now to Kashiwazaki, with the boy's letter and keepsakes of the father.

With tears my sleeves are wet,
I go to dry them in the sunlight.
My sleeves are wet with tears.

The road on which I travelled was Yukinoshita. Showers of rain fell as I passed through Yamano-uchi. My sleeves were still wet. Traversing the mountain pass of Usui, I come to Echigo. Making great haste, I have arrived at my home Kashiwazaki. I will announce myself. So I call to someone in the house, "Kotaro of Kashiwazaki has come. Please announce me."

THE WIFE OF KASHIWAZAKI : Oh, Kotaro, is my husband with you ? Why don't you speak ?

KOTARO : I have returned, but I do not know how to tell you.

THE WIFE : I am worried because you are weeping without speaking a word. Has anything happened to Hanawaka ?

KOTARO : Yes, Master Hanawaka has given up the world.

THE WIFE : Do you mean that he has become a monk ? Did his father reprove him ? Why have you not searched for him ?

KOTARO : It is not as you think. Look ! I have brought you some keepsakes.

THE WIFE : What do you mean by keepsakes ? Ah, I see ! My husband is dead.

Ever since he left me, I was ever yearning. Yearning for the wind that blows from Kamakura.

How glad I was when tidings came from him. But now, alas ! I must receive his keepsakes. He left home only for a time, soon to return.

How sorrowful is my heart ! How deeply sad
am I !

CHORUS : He will never return. Sorrowful,
indeed, it is

Such keepsakes to receive.

THE WIFE : Tell me, I beg of you, in his last
moments

What message did he leave ? This may console
me.

KOTARO : For his old home ever longing,
In his last moments, he spoke some parting words.

THE WIFE : After a long separation and far
from each other

How bitter to lose him ! Never can I forget this
sorrow !

KOTARO : True it is, but restrain your grief
And look ! for here, I give to you
The mementoes that are left of him.

THE WIFE : Deep though my unending grief,
Yet in this life it cannot be helped.

CHORUS : Seeing these tokens, I cannot keep
back my tears,
My tears I cannot withhold when I look upon
these tokens.

KOTARO : Here is a letter from Master Hana-
waka.

Please read it.

THE WIFE (*reading the letter*) : " Soon after my
father became ill, he died. Please have sympathy
for my grief. At first, I thought I would return

home to tell you what had happened, but I have resolved to enter the Buddhist life. I feared you would try to deter me from it. If I live, I will return within three years. Console yourself with the mementoes that are sent."

How sad I am when I read these lines.

CHORUS : Is there anything better than a child to preserve the memory of a father ?

He became a monk for sorrow over the death of his dear father.

His heart with grief was filled when his father passed away.

But why does he not wish to see again

The mother who is living ? Oh, how heartless !

How could he not come back to me ?

So felt I in my grief which was so deep,

But now I pray to the gods and to the Buddha

To protect him, to keep him safe.

May he be protected. May he live in safety.

(Interval.)

SCENE 2. *At the Temple of Zenkoji.*

A PRIEST : I am the abbot of Zenkoji, in the country of Shinano. This young man beside me, although I do not know whence he comes, asked me to permit him to become my pupil. I agreed to let him become a monk. He accompanies me to the hall of the Buddha every day. To-day, we shall go again.

*(The wife of the Master of Kashiwazaki
appears as the demented mother.)*

MOTHER: You children there, why do you
laugh at me? Do you think I am so funny?
Thoughtful people should console me, but you
only laugh at me.

Parted from my husband,
For he has passed away.
And the child he had left for a memory
Has vanished, I know not where,
Like a skein of thread,

CHORUS: Entangling my heart, mad I have
become.

MOTHER: It is said life is uncertain, but I
believe it not.
For however grieved my heart, death does not
come to me.

My mad condition tells me this. Alas! how sad
I am,

Thinking, ever longing for my husband and my
son!

However sad I am, it cannot be helped:

Mad I was when I left Kashiwazaki;

Mad I was when I arrived at Kō.

My heart is like a hempen dress

All crushed and miserable.

As I travel, people know me not.

And I am lonely in the pine-tree wind.

Evening has come in the village of Tokiwa,

A poor place, miserable as I am.

Neglected I am on account of my son.
Like the pheasant calling for its lost child,
Even so am I.

In Asano, there is a flurry of snow,
In Monye the paulownia blooms,
The mountains lie to the east,
Zenkoji stands to the west.

Amida will forgive my madness,
And to the Pure Land he will lead my husband.

PRIEST : Here, you crazy woman, you must not
enter the inner circle of the temple. Get out
quickly.

MOTHER : To save wicked souls there is only
one way,
If devoted to Amida,¹⁹ they may enter Paradise.

PRIEST : You are a strange woman.
Who taught you such things ?

MOTHER : He who taught me was the Buddha ;
Only in the mind is Paradise.

So within this temple's inner circle
We may find the lotus seed of Gokuraku.²⁰

Why are women kept from this place ?

Did Amida give direction so to do ?

No matter what people may say about me,

Sincerely devoted I am to the Buddha,

Repeating, "Namu Amida Butsu."²¹

This will surely lead me aright.

CHORUS : Have faith in Amida Buddha,
Put your trust in Amida Buddha.

MOTHER : Shakamuni directs us,

CHORUS : And Amida leads us straightly,
For the Pure Land is not far from here.
It is in the highest part of the Inner Circle—
Of the Paradise in the West.
Oh, let me go there ! let me enter there !
Listen to his vow, " My eternal Light
Shines all over the world."

Oh, all you people, throughout this night
Call on the Buddha Amida with Nembutsu.

MOTHER : I wish to speak to you, O Priest.
I wish to offer to the Buddha
This hat and coat which were my husband's.
I hold in memory the poem keepsake
Which he left as a blessing to me.
But reminding me of him, it troubles me.
Have I a chance to forget him ?
Without them, I might forget a little while,
So I present them to the Buddha Amida.
As I pray for his salvation, how I long for him !

Accomplished he was in all things,
In archery expert, in poetry skilled.
This hat and coat he wore at a banquet,
As he danced, the people clapped hands to keep
tune,
He held a fan as he sang Naruwataki no mizu.

CHORUS : In the voice that recites the Nem-
butsu
Shines the light of Amida,
He waits to receive all sinners,

Amida himself with many holy ones
Comes on a cloud to save us.

MOTHER : The lotus flowers in Paradise are in
full bloom,

CHORUS : And celestial fragrance issues from
there,

While on the ground is seen a white rainbow.

MOTHER : When we think of the world's illusion
And the uncertainty of human life,
Men are like dispersed flowers
And falling leaves in the rain.

CHORUS : Life is as short as the flash of a light,
Quick as a flint-stone spark,
So is the passing of birth and death,
Why should we feel surprise ?
Life is a dream in which we are tied
In the relation of mother and child.
On this sad road of illusion I travel,
My existence is like a drop of dew.

MOTHER : Ah, who can tell the end of life's
journey ?

CHORUS : That is the way in this world of
sorrows ;

As we think indeed of this triple world ²²
Through which we pass, and we feel attached
To the life in this world, while the light
Of the moon is covered o'er with clouds,—
The clear moon which shines eternally
On the seat of the Absolute Sameness.
How pitiful we are, for instead of trying

To reach the truth, we find ourselves entangled
In the bonds of our evil passions.
The mountain of passions how high it is !
The ocean of birth and death how deep !
While living like this, can we be saved ?
How sad indeed is our human life
Burdened with sins of body, speech, and thought.

MOTHER : Such is the first teaching of the
Buddha.

CHORUS : Of one mind is this triple world,
Outside of the mind are no real objects.
Buddhas, Mind, and Beings all are One.
As this is true, there must be no doubt at all,
For this very body of ours is Amida's,
And this mind is the Land of Purity.
Except in this mind we cannot search elsewhere.
Are not the lotuses of the sacred pond
The same as those to be found in the Pure Land ?
Therefore, let us pray to enter into the Light,
The Light of Amitabha, relying on his Nembutsu ;
The Nembutsu indeed is our saving boat
Which takes us to the golden shore
Where we find the consummation of happiness.
According to the different teachings,
And according to the different paths,
We may be led away from this world of woe ;
Presently we shall all reach that pond
Which is filled with pure treasure water,
Whose shores are strewn with the sands of merit ;
There the floors of all the lotus seats

Are encrusted with precious stones,
There is bliss eternal and immeasurable ;
Amida is indeed the Buddha of Eternal Life,
He it is who, by attaining his own enlightenment,
Has vowed to save all the worlds in the ten
quarters.

MOTHER : So it will be, for his original vow is
infallible.

CHORUS : Oh, may my husband—how I long
for him—

Be safely led to that fair country in the West,
Where the white clouds drift over the mountains,
And may I also be born with him
In that same Land of Purity !
This is my prayer. May Amida grant it !
I hear the sound of the Nembutsu and the bell
Still continuing unto the break of day.
How full of bliss is the Light !
How full of bliss is the Light !
Oh, grant my prayer !
Salutation to the Most Honoured Amida Buddha !
Salutation to the Most Honoured Amida Buddha !

CHORUS (*for Priest*) : I can conceal it no longer
from you,
The happy fact that here is your son.
Yet it makes me shed tears.

MOTHER : What do I hear ? By joy overcome
I think it is a dream.

Oh, my beloved son ! How strange ! How
wonderful !

CHORUS : Although she knows he is her son,
Yet he seems so changed in his black monk's
robes.

MOTHER : So changed, I could not recognise
him.

CHORUS : The mother too is altered—her mind
distracted.

MOTHER : Yes, they say that mad I have
become.

CHORUS : Her appearance now so different
And he too not the same,
They gaze at each other amazed :
But regarding her more closely,
The son has found his mother.
Like the bloom-tree in ancient poetry
Which appears real, but when approached
vanishes,

She looks like the old mother he knew
In spite of her sad mien and altered form.
But after all, mother and child are together once
more.

Ah, what a happy outcome this meeting between
mother and son !

What a joyful event is this reunion between
mother and child !

TSUCHIGUMO ²³

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Shite : (1) A Priest.
(2) The Spirit of a Spider.
Waki : A Retainer of Raiko.²⁴
Tsure : Minamoto no Raiko.²⁴
Tsure : Kocho, a maid-servant.
Tomo : A servant.
Places : Kyoto and Yamato.

SCENE 1. *Raiko's Sickroom in Kyoto*

KOCHO : The floating clouds are driven by the wind.

What destiny is theirs ?

I wish to know the feeling of the breeze
That blows those clouds.

I am a maid serving Raiko. Raiko is suffering much. I am going to visit him, taking some medicine which our doctor sent. Is there anyone within ?

SERVANT : Who is it ?

KOCHO : Bearing medicine given by the doctor, I, Kocho, have come. Pray tell him so.

SERVANT : Certainly ; I will let you know what he says.

RAIKO : Disappearing here, appearing there, water bubbles. Human life is like that. Indeed, unknown to anyone, my heart is as heavy as my bed quilts. I have no malice towards anyone, yet I, the lonely one, suffer, and I have no one to complain to. I will sleep on one of my sleeves.

SERVANT : I should like to inform you that Kocho has come, bringing medicine sent by the doctor.

RAIKO : Bid her come in.

SERVANT : I obey. Please come this way.

KOCHO : I have brought some medicine given by the doctor. How are you feeling ?

RAIKO : I am worse and have more pain. Now I am only waiting for my end, which may come soon.

KOCHO : Do not worry. Illness is always painful. It may be cured ; there are many examples.

RAIKO : I have not given up hope.

CHORUS : Unconscious he is of day and night,
The sick man suffers so.

Time passes, but he knows it not.

Body and mind are full of pain.

(A Priest enters.)

I will continue my sleep.

PRIEST : To-night the midnight has no moon,
For the sky with clouds and heavy mists
Is covered thickly o'er.

Ho, Raiko ! How do you feel ?

RAIKO : How strange ! In the depth of the night
An unknown priest does visit me.
Who are you ? Pray tell.

PRIEST : 'Tis a foolish question to ask.
Your trouble is due to the spider's power.
Hear the old song :

" This night is the night when my lover will
come ! " *

RAIKO : I knew not a spider caused my pain.
But ah ! As it comes nearer to me
Like a spider indeed it appears.

PRIEST : With thousands of threads it en-
tangles you,

RAIKO : Binds up my entire body,

PRIEST : Giving suffering to you.

CHORUS : As soon as he knew that a demon was
there,

His strong sword from his pillow he drew ;
He thrust at the form with all his might
And cut at it several times.
With a loud cry, Vanished ! Vanished !
The spider has disappeared.

RETAINER : As I heard your loud cry I have
come. What is the matter ?

RAIKO : Quickly come. Draw nearer to me.
I will tell you what has passed.
Midnight it was. An unknown priest
Inquired my state of health.

* " This night is the night when my lover will come,
For I can tell it by the actions of the spider."

When I asked him who he was
An ancient poem he sang.
Suddenly into a spider he turned.
Seven feet long he was.
Thousands of webs he put out
In which to entangle me.
I cut at it with my sword
Lying beside my pillow.
He disappeared.
No doubt 'twas due to my sword's virtue
And its name shall be changed.
Hizamaru shall become Kumokiri.
How wonderful ! How wonderful !

RETAINER : Beyond words.
But this is not the first time
Your sword has wielded power.
Congratulations I tender to you.
I see that the sword is stained with much blood.
Dispel this demon.
This demon shall be dispelled,
By the dripping sword we shall trace him.

RAIKO : Make haste ! Make haste !

RETAINER : I obey ! I obey !

SCENE 2. Before a Tomb in Yamato Province

RAIKO'S RETAINER : To our great Lord, the
earth and trees belong,
No place to hide a demon can be found.

Forth came a warrior and cried aloud
Before the tomb where hid the awful creature :
" My name you've heard, for I'm a soldier brave
In Raiko's service. Unafraid am I
Though fierce you are, and from the other world,
Demon, you have come. I'll end your life.
O men, destroy the tomb ! "

From his great cry, their courage all renewed.

CHORUS : " Destroy the tomb, soldiers, destroy
the tomb. "

Encouraged by him, the men obeyed his order.
The tomb upturned, and from within emerged
Water and flame, but still they quailed not.
The tomb destroyed, and from the rock's crevice
See the form of the demon there appeared,
" Ha, look ! for here the spider's spirit stands
Who in the mountain many years did dwell.
To trouble the sovereign's reign I hoped,
And so I approached Raiko.
Alas ! Is this to be my end ? "

RETAINER : Then a warrior stepped forward.

CHORUS : Yes, a warrior stepped forward and
said,

" Living you are in the land of our sovereign,
My master you disturbed, so with his sword
By heaven you are punished.
I end your life. "

So saying, they fought.

Thousands of webs the spider then threw out.

As they tried to escape from the threads of the web

Men were thrown to the ground.

But, however—

CHORUS : However—

Putting their trust in the gods and sovereign's
land,

The soldiers the spider surrounded

And jumped upon it.

The chance they took that the spider feared the
flashing

Of the swords.

Ah, they have made thrusts at it !

See, they have cut off its head !

Joyously, they returned to the capital.

YUKI

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Shite : The Spirit of Snow.

Waki : A travelling priest.

Place : Province of Setsu.

PRIEST : Though I have come far,
Far out to Sue no Matsuyama,
My destination is not decided.
A travelling monk am I.
In the province of Mutsu I have spent some days ;
But now on a journey to Setsu I am resolved.
The weather is so fine that I can dry
My black monk's robe wet from travel ;
Rarely are clouds seen in the sky.
I am used to long journeys
Throughout the country,
Sometimes passing the night in the open fields,
Sometimes going through the mountains.
At last I have come to Noda,
Noda, a famous place in Setsu Province,
I have hurried on my way and now reached Noda.
But troubled I am, for the clear sky
Has suddenly become overcast.
It has begun to snow.
Ahead of me, I cannot see an inch.

I will stop here for a time,
And wait for the snow to cease.

SPIRIT OF THE SNOW: How beautiful is the snow!
If you enter into the garden
Belonging to the king of Ryo,
In the very early morning,
All the snow-capped mountains you will see ;
But if you go up the tower
Of the king of Yü,
In the depth of the night
The moon you will see
As it shines on the universe,
Before the moonlight of Truth,
Which is what we call the Dharma,²⁵
The clouds of prejudices and evil desires
Will all disappear ;
And I too rely upon the light—
The light of the Buddha.

PRIEST: How strange to see a woman appearing
in the snow !
May I ask you who you are ?

SPIRIT OF THE SNOW: I know not who I am,
I came here naturally.

PRIEST: You know not who you are ?
Then are you not perhaps
Spirit of the Snow ?

SPIRIT OF THE SNOW: Yes, I am White Snow,
Ignorant White Snow ;
Show me, I beg of you,
The way to deliverance.

PRIEST: White Snow you are,
 Due to the virtue of the Dharma
 Are my words to you.
 Listen. Doubt not the Buddha's teaching,
 And with all your heart
 Attain to enlightenment.

SPIRIT OF THE SNOW: How grateful I am!
 Blessed be the excellent teaching,
 The wise teaching of the *Hokke Sutra*,²⁶
 Which melts the metallic heart of doubt.

CHORUS: Down upon the ground descending,
 I melt away;
 Thinking of the past, I pray
 To be saved.
 I am White Snow.
 Piling for ever higher
 My ignorance and my desires,
 How I shiver this night
 Under the cold moon!

SPIRIT OF THE SNOW: As I pass over snow-
 covered mountains,
 As I pass over frozen streams,

CHORUS: May I not lose the way,
 As did the ancient poet
 Rowing his boat against the waves;
 He sang, "My boat I row
 Against the rock, with splashes
 My sleeves are wet.
 Tears of grief! A heart not knowing where to
 go."

Oh, help me to cross the stream,
Help me to deliverance.

The white sleeves of Lady Snow
Are swaying in the moonlight.
They look like the robes of a flower.
How heavily, how heavily falls the snow.

SPIRIT OF THE SNOW : Dawn approaches,
The mist begins to clear,
The river Noda comes to view.

CHORUS : Revealed will be

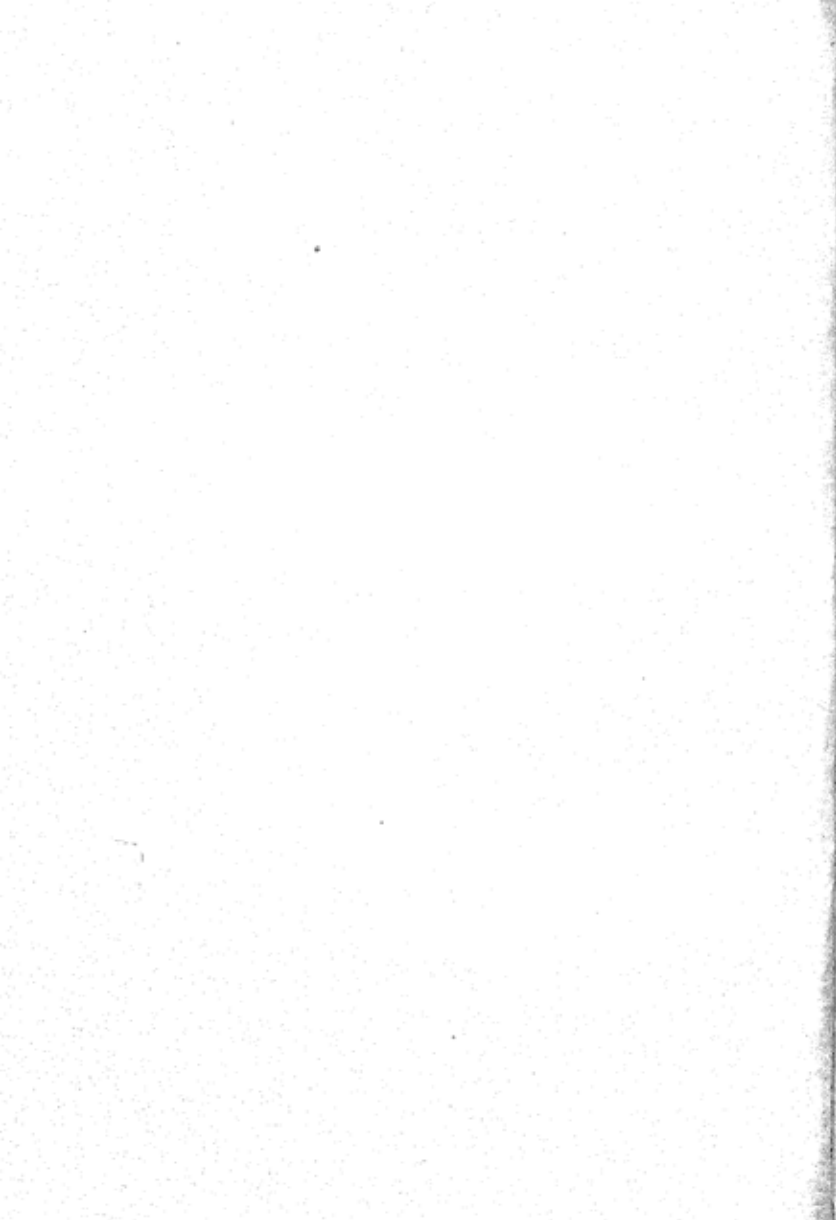
SPIRIT OF THE SNOW : The form of the White
Dew,

CHORUS : The form of the White Dew.
Encircled by the clouds,
The summits of the mountains
Grow brighter and brighter in the dawn.

SPIRIT OF THE SNOW : I must not be seen by
them,
If I remain here until daybreak.

CHORUS : So I will depart.
On my way home, I saw the white flower of snow,
On the tree-tops in the mountains,
Melting, gradually melting.

SUMMARIES OF SEVEN PLAYS



I

KAMO

By ZENCHIKU

Shite : (1) A village woman.

(2) The Thunder God, Wake-Ikazuchi.

Tsure : A divine maiden.

Waki : Priest of Moro no Myojin shrine.

Three Attendants.

Place : Yamashiro.

Season : June.

The first part tells the story of the lady Tamayori who was washing on the banks of the Kamo river when an arrow came flying towards her. She took it up and put it over her door. Soon after this she found herself with child, and a boy was born to her. Later, her parents called the people together, brought the boy, and told him to bring forward the man he held for his father. But before none of them did the boy bow, but looking up went over to the arrow over the door. The arrow over the door was the symbolic appearance of the god, Wake-Ikazuchi. Then the arrow flew up to heaven.

In the first scene the village woman, who is accompanied by the divine maiden, tells the story to the priest, and how the arrow dunning a roar of thunder flew up to heaven, and was really the god Wake-Ikazuchi, and the mother also became a goddess. The woman then sings of the mountain and its scenery.

In the second part the heavenly maiden comes and dances most beautifully. She is the symbol of Nature itself, and her swaying movements seem to suggest the movements of Nature. As the chorus sings of the beauties of Mount Kamo, the heavenly maiden dances.

Now enters the god Wake-Ikazuchi most splendidly attired. He cries out, "I am he who protects the palace of the Emperor." Then follows a duet between the god and the chorus, accompanied with a dance.

"The sound of thunder !
The drum of the thunder god,
When beaten on time,
Proclaims the hour
For the five grains to ripen.
Then the land is well governed,
Divine virtues and divine powers
Are fully revealed.
Now the ancestral god flies through the forest of
Tadasu
Leaving clouds and mist behind ;

Now the thunder god too passing through the
clouds
Ascends to heaven,
Disappearing in the clear sky."

This piece is pure Shinto in its story and its treatment. It must be seen in order to appreciate its grace of movement and the charm of its effects. The movements of the chief actors seem to hint of heavenly things. The simple story is the setting for the display of great skill in song and dance. When the end comes, the spectator feels as if he had awakened from a dream or just returned from another world than this. It is this which Nō tries to do, to open the door to another life and another truth and give us a glimpse of the ideal reality.

II

MORIHISA

By SEAMI

Shite : Morihisa Taira, samurai.

Waki : Tsuchiya Saburo, retainer of Yoritomo.

Tsure : Tachitori, swordsman.

Places : Scene 1—in Kyoto.

 " 2—in Kamakura.

Time : Spring.

Morihisa was a *samurai* belonging to the Taira clan, and after the defeat of the Taira at Dan no ura, Morihisa took refuge in Kyoto and hid himself there, where Yoritomo, who desired to capture him, was not able to find him for some time. But at last a retainer of Yoritomo, Tsuchiya Saburo, discovered him while worshipping Kwannon (the Bodhisattva Kwanzeon) at the temple of Kiyomizu. Morihisa was a devout believer in Kwannon, and when captured he begged that he might visit the temple once more before proceeding to Kamakura.

The first scene takes place in Kyoto and then relates the story of the journey from Kyoto to Kamakura. Tsuchiya permits Morihisa to go by

the road of Higashiyama, past the temple of Kiyomizu. Here Morihisa prays to Kwannon, the Bodhisattva of compassion :

“ Adoration to Kwanzeon,
 Who is full of mercy and compassion !
 Kwanzeon's vows are to help those,
 Even those who but once utter his name
 Or think but once of him.
 How much more will one be in his grace
 Whose worship of him has lasted for a long time !
 Now I have to say farewell.
 I do not know when I shall see Kiyomizu temple
 again,
 In the fullness of the cherry-blossom time.
 Spring may never come back to me.
 I weep silently. This mountain waterfall
 Knows not how sorrowful is my heart.”

The second scene takes place in Morihisa's room in Kamakura. Morihisa is seated by himself, reflecting on the sad fate of himself and his friends, when Tsuchiya enters and tells him that Yoritomo has ordered his execution for the following day. When Morihisa hears this, he begins to pray to Kwannon, recalling to him that he has promised salvation to all who call upon his name, and he begs him to lead him to paradise. Even Tsuchiya unites in prayer with him, and they remember that Kwannon saves all who believe

in him and that his great mercy reaches even to hell. Morihisa asks for happiness in the next world, and he seems to hear the words found in the *Lotus Sutra*, "When one meets disaster and is about to be executed and prays for the prolonging of life, and while thinking of the power of Kwannon, the sword of execution will be broken to pieces."

Now comes the preparation for the execution. Taking the *sutra* of Kwannon in one hand and his rosary in the other, with soldiers before and behind him, Morihisa proceeds to the sea-beach of Yui. He seats himself, waiting for the sword to fall, with his face turned towards the west in the direction of Kwannon of Kiyomizu and with a prayer upon his lips.

But just as the sword-bearer is ready to strike off his head, his eyes are blinded by the light from the *sutra* and his sword falls, broken in two. All are astonished, but Morihisa realises that this wonderful incident is due to the fulfilment of Kwannon's promise to his ardent follower.

The news is carried to Yoritomo, who orders Morihisa to be brought at once to his Court.

The last scene takes place at the Court of Yoritomo, where Morihisa explains his faith in Kwannon, and tells of a dream he had one morning when an aged priest, holding a crystal rosary in one hand and a staff in the other, appeared to him and told him that he had come to save him

from death. Because Morihisa had never failed in his faith, he would give up his own life in his place. Strangely, Yoritomo had had this same dream. So he pardoned Morihisa and gave him his freedom.

It was known that Morihisa was very skilled in the art of dancing, so, as this was a time for rejoicing, Yoritomo ordered Morihisa to dance. So he dances in praise of Yoritomo's fame, and having finished, he goes quickly away, heeding the voice of caution which tells him that it is wise to retreat before Yoritomo may change his mind.

III

YUYA

By SEAMI

Shite : Yuya, mistress of Munemori.

Tsure : Asagao, a maid.

Waki : Taira no Munemori.

Tomo : His attendant.

Place : Kyoto, in spring.

It was cherry-blossom time in Kyoto.

Taira no Munemori had a beautiful mistress named Yuya, whose home was in a country village. The old mother of Yuya, being very ill, has sent a letter begging her daughter to return to visit her before she dies, but Munemori forbids her to go, and insists that she attend the cherry-blossom viewing at Kiyomidzu.

As Yuya does not return home, her mother sends the maid Asagao to Kyoto, with a letter for Yuya. The beautiful girl appears. She is longing for her mother and her home. When she sees Asagao, she is delighted to have a message from her mother, but she becomes sad when she learns how seriously ill her mother is, and declares

that she will ask Munemori once more to let her go. Yuya reads aloud the pathetic letter which her mother has written to her. The letter says :

"The spring night dream at Kansen Palace is something to break one's heart, and the autumnal moon at Lisan Palace may have its ending. Even the Tathagata, who was the great teacher of the Law, could not escape death. In the second month of the year when I saw you last, I had an impression that this spring would be my last to see the cherry-blossoms. The old tree is growing old and the old nightingale cannot wait for another spring to come. I have to shed many tears. Ask your lord's permission and try to come to see me, even if only for a little while, before I die. The parental relationship does not last more than for one lifetime. If we do not see each other again in this life, there will always be something wrong in connexion with your filial piety. By all means, I pray, come to see me while I am still alive. When one is old anything may happen in the meantime, and we might have to part without seeing each other ; so my earnest desire is to see you once again. While writing this, I think of the old poem which tells of parting without meeting again. I write with tears."

Yuya begs Munemori to let her go, but Munemori will not listen, and orders the flower-viewing chariot. Yuya is obliged to accompany him, but her heart is heavy. When they reach Kiyo-

midzu, Yuya begs Kwannon, the Bodhisattva of mercy, to help her. While she is praying, she is called to join Munemori at the banquet which is spread for them, and Munemori asks her to dance. While she is dancing, outwardly beautiful and happy, but inwardly sad and sorrowful, Munemori reads the poem she has just written :

“ What shall I do ? I do not like to part
With the spring of the capital.
But the flowers in the east
Where I used to live
Are meanwhile falling.”

He is touched by the poem, and under its influence he tells her she may go to her mother. Then Yuya, delighted and grateful for Kwannon's mercy and her lord's kindness, changes her dance, and instead of sorrow, happiness and joy stream from her.

She finishes her dance, takes leave of Munemori, and prepares to go to her old mother.

“ How glad I am ! Farewell.
All is due to the grace of Kwannon.
If I follow thee back to the capital,
Thy mind may change. I go east from here.
The wild geese are flying away
Leaving the flowers behind them,
They are flying to the north.
I go to the east. Once more farewell.”

IV

SEMIMARU

By KWANZE MOTOKIYO

Shite : Princess Sakagami.

Tsure : Prince Semimaru.

Waki : Kiyotsura, envoy of the Emperor.

Place : Yamishiro, Kyoto.

A son of the Emperor Engi was born blind, and so great was the Emperor's disappointment that he ordered his envoy Kiyotsura to take the young man to Osakayama, shave his head like a priest's, and leave him there. Kiyotsura regrets this deeply, and cannot understand what seems to him the hard-hearted order of the Emperor. But Prince Semimaru reminds him that his blindness must be due to his sins in a past life, and that therefore it cannot be helped.

Kiyotsura shaves his head, and presents him with a straw rain-coat and a staff. He weeps as he bids the prince farewell. The prince is left alone, shedding tears as he sits in the straw-thatched hut of the barrier.

The Princess Sakagami appears. She is also a child of the Emperor, but she has become crazy, and so has been sent away. Leaving the flowery capital, crossing the river Kamo, arriving at Awataguchi, she has arrived at the barrier of Osakayama, but her thoughts remain in the capital. She bewails her miserable appearance, and gazes despairingly at her reflection in the water, when suddenly she hears the tones of a lute and wonders who is playing it. She approaches the hut and listens. Prince Semimaru calls out asking who is there, and Princess Sakagami recognises the voice of her brother. The prince opens the door and an affecting meeting between brother and sister takes place. They realise that by this chance meeting the karmic relation between brother and sister is a very deep one. They mourn their fate; through Karma cast down, he has become a blind priest and she a crazy woman wandering in the country.

Meeting brings parting. They cannot stay together.

SEMIMARU sings :

Pity me who am staying.

And SAKAGAMI replies :

Truly how sad it is,

The one who goes may be consoled,

But the one who stays

Can do naught but weep.

SEMIMARU : The evening crow near the barrier is crying. It darkens my heart.

SAKAGAMI : I, too, am going away
Though I am not tired of staying.

SEMIMARU : Ah, stay longer ! For this is our place of meeting.

SAKAGAMI : Passing through the village,

SEMIMARU : I hear voices in the distance.

SAKAGAMI : Under the eaves of the thatched house."

Then the CHORUS speaks for both of them :

Saying farewell they cry :

" Come again, come again."

They part, look at each other,

Tears welling up in their eyes.

.

This story must be read symbolically. It is really an exposition of the Buddhist doctrine of Karma as it was understood in the Middle Ages. Karma has made the prince blind and the princess crazy, the result of their evil acts in a past life. The emperor is the symbol of the hand of Life which casts out persons from happiness. Through their present suffering they can the more easily climb the steep road of human life and develop their spiritual selves in the conditions for spiritual development, for there is not much difference between a palace and a straw-thatched house.

The wording of this play is exceedingly beauti-

ful and pathetic, and always has a powerful effect upon the audience. A number of Nō enthusiasts have told me that this is their favourite Nō play. There is a pathos and tenderness in it which appeals, and for those who look deeper a symbology of religious philosophy.

V

DŌJŌJI

By KWANAMI

Shite : (1) A dancer.

(2) A serpent.

Waki : Priest of Dōjōji Temple.

Tsure : Attendants.

Kyōgen : Workers at the temple.

Scene : Temple of Dōjōji.

Time : Spring.

The head-priest of the temple of Dōjōji is having a new bell hung in the temple, and is about to hold a ceremony to celebrate the event. No women are to be admitted to the enclosure during the ceremony, but a dancing girl comes and begs the servant to let her in that she may dance before the bell. Then she enters; she dances; but as soon as it gets dark, she jumps up, seizes the bell, pulls it down, and hides herself in it.

Then the servant comes to tell the head-priest that the bell has fallen, and that a woman had been admitted to the enclosure; the priest is very troubled, and he tells his fellow-priests the reason

why he wished to exclude women. This was his story.

In ancient days there was an inn-keeper named Shoji who had a daughter whom he loved very much. A certain travelling monk often visited the inn on his way to the temple of Kumano. One day, the inn-keeper in a joke told his daughter that the priest loved her, and that some day they would marry. Now, the priest never spoke of his love for her, but still she believed what her father had told her and waited for a long time. At last, becoming impatient, she went to the priest's room and asked him how long she must wait. He was very much surprised, and spoke kindly to her, but that night he quietly left the inn, and came to this temple of Dōjōji, begging the priests to hide him. They did not know what to do, but they lowered the bell and let him creep inside it. The girl, inflamed with love, ran after him and came to the river Hidaka. She was unable to cross it, but through her passionate love she turned into a serpent, and was thus able to cross the river and come to Dōjōji. She searched everywhere, and finally came to the lowered bell, and some intuition told her the priest was within. Seven times she wound her body around the bell. Then breathing upon it with her breath of fire and striking it with her tail, the bell gradually melted and the priest was consumed. What a terrible story ! What a terrible Karma !

Everyone was astonished to hear this story, and thought it an awful tale. They decided to pray that the bell might be raised, and they united in chanting sacred prayers.

They prayed :

“To the East, Gozanze Myoo ;
To the South, Gundari Myoo ;
To the West, Daiitoku Myoo ;
To the North, Kongo yasha Myoo ;
In the Middle, Taisho Fudo.”

“Nomaku Samanta Bosarada Senda Chanda Makaroshana Obataya Untarata Kanman.”

“All who listen to me will obtain great enlightenment. Those who know me will realise Buddhahood just as they are.”

“All the Nagas (sacred serpents) are invited to take part in the consecration ceremony, and will accept our prayers, and as this great serpent also belongs to the Naga family, it cannot do us any harm.”

When they kept on praying, the breath of the serpent which she exhaled against the bell changed into flame and burned her own body. So she leaped out from the fiery bell and jumped into the whirling pool of the river Hidaka.

The priests, seeing how effective their prayers had been, contentedly went on with preparations for the celebration.

VI

KOCHŌ

By KWANZE KOJIRO

Shite : (1) A village woman.
(2) Spirit of the butterfly.
Place : Kyoto.
Time : Early spring.

The *Waki* is a travelling priest from Yamato who has come to Kyoto in cherry-blossom time. He describes his journey in poetic language. Arriving at the capital, he wished to see the sights of the city and he found an old palace which attracted him and made him think of ancient days. He saw red plum-blossoms blooming in the palace garden, so he approached closer in order to enjoy their beauty. As he drew near to the deserted building, to his great surprise a woman suddenly came out and spoke to him. She asked him whence he came and told him that this old palace was near the imperial palace and that in ancient times the courtiers came and composed poems on the beauties of the blossoms. The

priest is touched to hear this and in turn asks her who she is.

She says, "The cherry-blossoms are blooming at your home in Yoshino, but here in the capital the plum-flowers are still blooming. Here I live in this old garden and you may think that I am a human being, but I am not. I am a butterfly, a creature intoxicated with the love of flowers, and I put my body upon them. I have one great regret. Every spring, I fail to see the plum-blossoms in full bloom, so I am sad. Indeed, the life of a butterfly as it flies from flower to flower is like a dream. I have a karmic relation to many flowers, but alas! I have none for the plum-blossom." She relates an old story to the priest and then tells him that she will retire to a secluded place, and she promises to reappear in his dream. Then she disappears, vanishing as quickly as a dream.

The priest, half in surprise, half in pleasure, lies down under the plum-tree in the shade and recites a prayer before falling asleep.

The *Shite* in the form of a butterfly woman appears. She praises the *Hokke Sutra* which asserts that both sentient and non-sentient beings can attain Buddhahood.

"At last," she exclaims, "I can enjoy the red plum-blossoms and inhale their sweet odour."

The butterfly dances as the chorus sings of her delight as she flies from blossom to blossom.

When the autumn comes and only the chrysanthemum-flower remains, then the butterfly (*Kochō*) attains to Buddhahood. It is said that the spirit of the butterfly is the Bodhisattva who has charge of the play activity in the universe.

“ In the spring night the butterfly flew away,
Behind a veil of haze she disappeared.
In the cloud before the dawn she has vanished,
In the cloud before the dawn she has vanished.”

VII

FUJI

By SAAMI

Shite : (1) A village woman.
(2) Spirit of Wistaria.
Waki : A travelling priest.
Place : Etchu.
Time : May.

A travelling priest from Kyoto on his way to the famous temple of Zenkoji. He describes his journey, which ends at Tago no ura at Etchu, a place famous for wistaria-blossoms now in full bloom. He is admiring the flowers when he is accosted by a woman who recites a poem :

“ Since the wistaria at Tago no ura has flowered,
Even the waves of the beach were beautified
By the reflection of the wistaria-blossoms.”

She tells the priest that there are some persons who can understand and taste the colour and odour of the flower : to such persons the flower transmits its true meaning.

The priest asks the woman who she is, and she tells him that she is the spirit of the wistaria.

"I am the waves of the wistaria that hang upon the tree-tops, famous at Tago no ura." So saying, she disappears among the branches of the wistaria-tree.

In the moonlight, at midnight, she appears to him again, and when he asks her if she is not the same, she answers, "Yes":

"Attracted by the promise of salvation
Of the *Hokke Sutra*, here I have come
To bloom, to sing, to play, all through night,
Buddha's mercy to obtain."

The priest declares that she is a flower of the Dharma and will surely attain to Buddhahood, for such is the teaching of the Good Law.

The spirit of the wistaria dances and sings poetically of the four seasons and the flowers and especially of the karmic relation between the wistaria and the pine-tree, for the wistaria loves to wind its branches around it. The wistaria is a playing angel waving her purple sleeves against the sky.

"In the moonlight, the wistaria's shadow is
purple;
At daybreak, she gives forth the sweet odour;
In the trailing haze she has disappeared."

.

These two plays are very similar in plot and

idea, but one is about a flower and the other a butterfly. Both are full of Buddhist symbology and are an exposition of the teaching in the *Hokke Sutra* (*Saddharma Pundarika*) that all beings, not only men, but flowers, plants, animals, stones—even the snow and so on—have latent Buddhahood and will yet attain it. There are a number of other beautiful Nō plays on the same subject, but these are quite typical of the form, and both of them are extremely lovely in poetic style, singing, dancing, and costuming.

In the play "Fuji" there are references to the colour purple which are full of subtle and mystic meaning. The very colour of purple of the wistaria shows that she has a deep relationship to Buddhism. In fact, everything in Nō—colours, shapes, odours, sounds, movements—has a deep significance, and there should be much reading between the lines and plunging below the surface waters.

NOTES

¹ Ki no Tsurayuki (883-946), the compiler of the *Kokinshu*, the most famous poet and literary man of his age, skilled in the classical tradition and culture, author of many poems and of the *Tosa-nikki*. He is regarded as a master of Japanese poetry.

² Sumiyoshi shrine is in Settsu on the road to Kii.

³ Tamatsushima shrine is on Waka no ura (literally, the bay of poetry) in the Province of Kii. The Princess Satori is enshrined there as one of the three deities of poetry.

⁴ Gubijin was the sweetheart of General Kou of China in the first century. Kou participated in the overturning of the China dynasty with the first Emperor of Han, but was defeated by the Han Emperor and obliged to commit suicide. At a last banquet, the general sang his own poem :

"I am strong enough to uproot mountains,
My spirit can cope with the whole world ;
But, alas ! the times have been against me.
My steed refuses to go farther.
What shall I do ? Oh, my Gu !
My Gu ! What will become of you ? "

⁵ Shosho was a place noted for its fine scenery, for the night rain, and for the evening bell.

⁶ Etsu was in the south of China, and the birds coming from there never forget their native place. So the horses of Ko are said to neigh when the wind blows from the north.

⁷ The Kagura dance is supposed to symbolise this and to represent the dancing of Ame no uzume no mikoto before the cave. This dance is now performed at Shinto shrines.

⁸ Rock Cave : The goddess of the sun, Amaterasu o mikami, incensed at her brother Susano's insolent behaviour,

hid herself in a rock cave, and the world was plunged in darkness. The other gods assembled before the cave, and by their singing and dancing enticed her to emerge.

⁹ Eight Events in the Life of the Buddha: 1. Descent from Tusita Heaven. 2. Conception. 3. Birth. 4. Renunciation. 5. Temptation. 6. Enlightenment. 7. Revolution of the Wheel of the Law. 8. Nirvana.

¹⁰ Ikuta: In 1184 a battle was fought between the Heike and the Genji at Ikuta in the province of Settsu, where Kajiwarra Kagesuye had a branch of a blooming plum-tree inserted in his *Ebira* (quiver), causing much comment both among his friends and foes.

¹¹ The Middle Path is the absolute truth, subsumed in any category of logic. It is the teaching of the Buddha, later emphatically upheld by Nāgārjuna.

¹² Fish-scales, spider-legs, etc., are military terms.

¹³ The Positive Principle is the doctrine of reality in which the world with its multiplicity of objects is affirmed as real. The Negative Principle is the doctrine of nothingness in which everything is negated.

¹⁴ Shurado is the world of the Asura (the fighting demons).

¹⁵ Shizuka Gozen was the mistress of Yoshitsune. She accompanied her lover on his flight to Yoshino. When Yoritomo intended to assassinate his brother in 1185, Shizuka notified her lover, who thus had time to flee. Yoshitsune sent Shizuka back to Kyoto, whence Yoritomo had her brought to Kamakura and forced her to dance at one of his feasts, killed her new-born child, and sent her back to Kyoto. Her pathetic story is often told in song, story, dance, and drama.

¹⁶ Yoshino: A mountainous district in the Province of Yamato. The scenery of Yamato has been the theme for many poems. It is noted for its cherry-blossoms.

¹⁷ Minamoto Yoshitsune (1159-1189): A national hero; the youngest son of the Shogun called in childhood Ushiwaka. He helped his brother Yoritomo in the war against the Taira and won the battle at Ichi no tani (see the play "*Ebira*"). His brother became jealous of his popularity and eventually Yoshitsune was obliged to flee. He took refuge in Yamato and after many vicissitudes, accompanied by his faithful retainer, Benkei, he was at last forced to commit suicide

when only thirty years old. He is the hero of many Kabuki dramas and Nō plays, and his story is sung and remembered all over Japan.

¹⁸ Sakoku: A poet. He loved flowers very much and kept his garden filled with them. After his death, he turned into a butterfly and visited the garden. This was known by his son, who saw it in a dream.

¹⁹ Amida the Buddha adored by the Pure Land sects. Together with twenty-five Bodhisattvas he comes on a cloud, to welcome the believer at death.

²⁰ Gokuraku is the Pure Land.

²¹ Namu Amida Butsu known as Nembutsu, is the holy phrase repeated by devotees of the Pure Land sects. It may be translated Adoration to the Buddha Amida.

²² The Triple World—the world of desire, the world of form, the world of no-form.

²³ Tsuchigumo: An earth spider which infested the Province of Yamato in the time of Jimmu Tenno.

²⁴ Minamoto no Raiko: A legendary warrior who is created with the slaughter of the ogres, demons, and goblins which infested medieval Japan. He had many adventures, one of them being the theme of this play. His retainer, here called Soldier, Watanabe no Tsuna, was also famous and met with many exploits. It was he who killed the spider as it emerged from the tomb. After it was killed, Raiko recovered his health.

²⁵ The Dharma is the truth of Buddhism, generally translated as the Law.

²⁶ *Hokke Sutra* is the *Saddharma Pundarika*, one of the most important texts of Mahayana Buddhism, especially of the Tendai and Nichiren sects.

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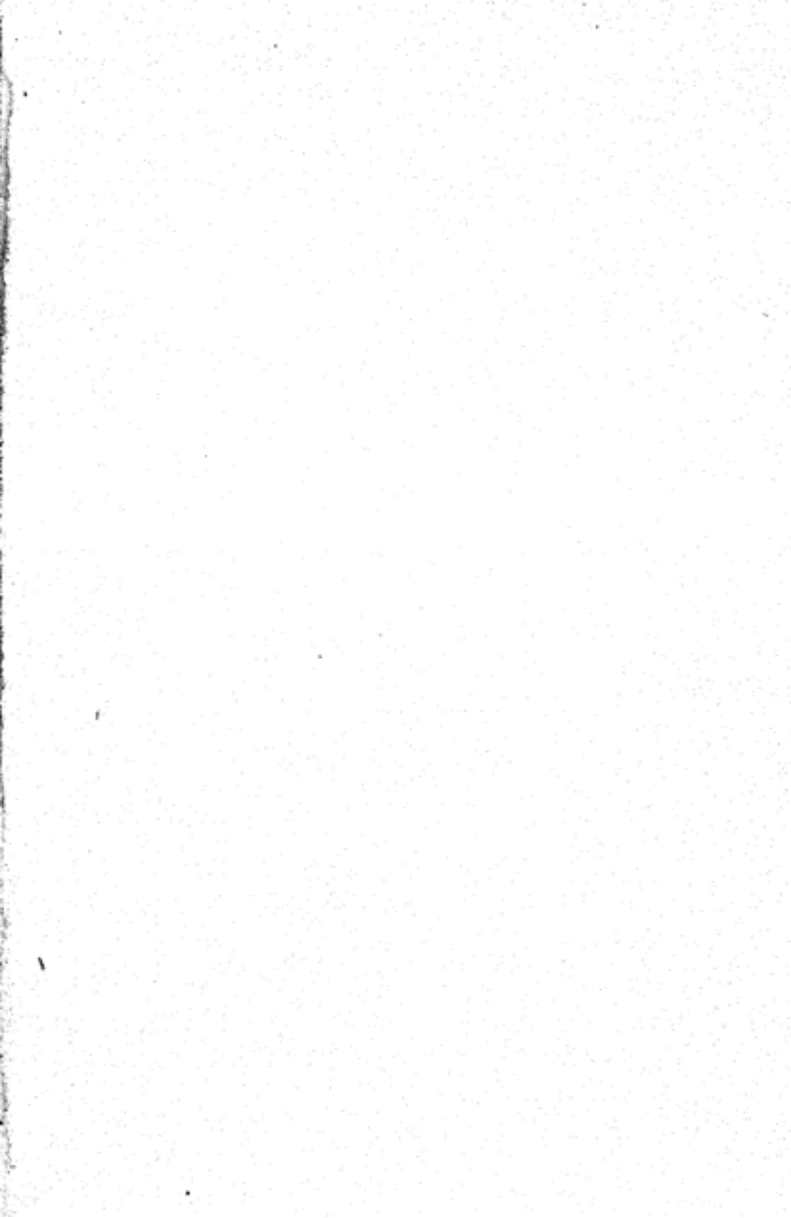
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